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**THE INFLUENCE OF SWITZERLAND ON
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF EDWARD GIBBON**

A THESIS OFFERED BY

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FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

HISTORY

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THE INFLUENCE OF SWITZERLAND ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF EDWARD GIBBON

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate, through close examination of Gibbon's lesser writings, in addition to his well-known works, the importance of Switzerland in his life and thinking. The texts used for this study are his *Journal de mon voyage*, written at the age of eighteen in 1755, his *Letter on the Government of Berne*, which is established here as a composition of the 1750's, his *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature*, the *Journals* which cover the years up to his tour of Italy in 1764, the topographical survey of classical Italy entitled *Nomina, gentesque antiquae Italiae*, and his *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses*, with reference throughout to *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the *Memoirs* and his *Letters*.

It was in Lausanne that he completed his education, began his first published work, the *Essai*, and entered into a society which was close to the centre of "The Enlightenment", enlivened as it was by the presence of Voltaire. Switzerland remained persistently in Gibbon's thoughts after his return to England in 1758; its society caused him to reside in Lausanne eleven months while he prepared for his tour of Italy in 1763/4; and the origins and evolution of Switzerland continued to be his preferred subject for his historical writings until 1767. Later, Lausanne offered him the society and historical resources which he desired when completing the last three volumes of his major work.

The main findings of this study establish Switzerland as a major influence on his feelings for liberty, independence and industry; the example of its communal assemblies and commitment to military preparedness formed an essential political reference in the historical judgements in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. As a result of his experience of Switzerland, Gibbon is more aware of the value of a free peasantry, and he applauds the benefits of industry and commerce to the community as a whole.

**THE INFLUENCE OF SWITZERLAND ON
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF EDWARD GIBBON**

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Map to illustrate Gibbon's Itinerary in 1755 *Facing page 14*

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. Mss.	British Library Additional Manuscripts.
<i>Decline and Fall</i>	Gibbon's <i>The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i> . Edited by J. B. Bury in seven volumes, London, 1909-14. All references to the <i>Decline and Fall</i> are to this edition, unless otherwise stated. Bury's numbering of Gibbon's footnotes has been retained.
<i>Historic Studies</i>	<i>Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy from Roman Times to Voltaire, Rousseau, and Gibbon</i> , in two volumes by General Meredith Read, London, 1897.
<i>Journal A</i>	Gibbon's <i>Journal to January 28th, 1763</i> . Edited by D. M. Low, London, 1929.
<i>Journal B</i>	<i>Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne, 17 Août 1763 - 19 Avril 1764</i> . Edited by Georges Bonnard, Lausanne, 1945.
<i>Keynes</i>	<i>The Library of Edward Gibbon</i> . A Catalogue edited and introduced by Geoffrey Keynes Kt. Second edition, St Paul's Bibliographies, 1980.
<i>La Vie</i>	<i>La Vie de Société dans le Pays de Vaud à la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle: Salomon et Catherine de Charrière de Sévery et leurs Amis</i> , in two volumes by M. et Mme William de Sévery. Reprint of 1911 edition, Genève, 1978.
<i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of Edward Gibbon</i> . Edited by J. E. Norton in three volumes, London, 1956.
<i>Memoirs</i>	<i>Edward Gibbon. Memoirs of My Life</i> . Edited by Georges A. Bonnard, London, 1966. All references to the <i>Memoirs</i> are to this edition, unless otherwise stated.
<i>Miscellanea</i>	<i>Miscellanea Gibboniana</i> . Edited by G. R. de Beer, G. A. Bonnard and L. Junod, Lausanne, 1952.
<i>Misc. Works</i>	<i>The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon</i> . Edited by John, Lord Sheffield in five volumes, second edition, London, 1814.

INTRODUCTION

Diligence and accuracy are the only merits which an historical writer may ascribe to himself...I may therefore be allowed to say, that I have carefully examined all the original materials that could illustrate the subject which I had undertaken to treat.¹

The purpose of this thesis is to show the importance of Switzerland on the life and thinking of Edward Gibbon. Though there have been several biographies and books on his writings since the standard biography of D. M. Low was published in 1937, none has concentrated exclusively on the Swiss dimension to his mind. Yet Gibbon spent perhaps his most impressionable years, from the age of sixteen to twenty-one, at Lausanne; he returned there at another impressionable period of his life, when on the Grand Tour, and was delayed there by his social ties and studies for eleven months at the age of twenty-six; and, finally, he retired there and regarded it as his permanent home for his last ten years. From 1753 to 1794, Gibbon thus spent over one third of his adult life at Lausanne, enabling him to see himself as a citizen of Europe and helping to establish his reputation as

l'un des plus brillants représentants de cette élite de penseurs, d'artistes et d'écrivains qui, au XVIIIe siècle, contribuèrent à ressusciter l'unité culturelle de l'Europe...²

1. From Gibbon's "Advertisement" to the first volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

2. The words of the Recteur of the University of Lausanne, Dominique Rivier, in the Préface to *Gibbon et Rome à la Lumière de l'Historiographie Moderne*, Genève, 1977, p. 8, a collection of essays commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the first volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Gibbon's experience of Switzerland in the first instance was the result of his conversion to Roman Catholicism at the age of fifteen, when his father decided to send his son to Lausanne to be reconverted to the Protestant faith and to complete his education. The choice of exile was the outcome of family consultation and the consequence was greater than could have been expected. Not only did Gibbon return to the Protestant fold but also he received an education which introduced him to the secular outlook of the European Enlightenment, personified in the presence of Voltaire on or close to the shores of Lake Geneva from 1754. Had Geneva, the more fashionable Protestant place of learning for a young Englishman to learn French, been chosen for Gibbon's reformation, the results would inevitably have been different. The city of Calvin, the Protestant Rome, as Voltaire called it, was outside the Swiss Confederation in Gibbon's time and was still a theocratic city state, confined by its ramparts, denied the pleasures of theatrical performances and subject to periodic social unrest. For over a century, it had attracted visits from high-spirited aristocrats with extravagant tastes who were often in trouble with the city authorities. Lausanne, on the other hand, was also Protestant and French-speaking, but was surrounded by the fertile Pays de Vaud and was socially quiescent and more pleasure-loving under the aristocratic rule of German-speaking Berne. Lausanne was chosen by Gibbon's father for reasons of economy and on the recommendation of a relative.³ He arranged for his son to be accompanied to Lausanne by a Swiss escort and to be placed under the care of Daniel Pavillard, a Protestant minister and teacher of Latin and ancient history at the Academy there. The results were immediately beneficial for the

3. Edward Eliot, who married Gibbon's cousin, Katherine Elliston, had been in Lausanne with Philip Stanhope, the natural son of the Earl of Chesterfield. Later as Lord Eliot he was to be Gibbon's patron in his parliamentary career.

precocious Gibbon, giving him for the first time a settled way of life and a scheme of education which his health and family circumstances had previously denied him.

The following chapters are intended to show, first, the extent of the influence of this education, and of the society that he quickly grew to enjoy in Lausanne, on Gibbon as a young man; and, then, how that influence was to affect his philosophy, his writings and his choice of company in later life in a way that has, I believe, not been fully established before. In referring to the influence of Switzerland, it has to be recognised that Gibbon's personal experience of it as a geographical area was largely confined to the Pays de Vaud, a dependency of the canton of Berne. Nevertheless the early history of the Swiss Confederation provided Gibbon with an example of how free and industrious communities could come together, in the defence of ancient rights, to resist external oppression. In this way, Switzerland became for him a model of independent nationhood, armed to maintain its customs and laws, and, apart from the aristocratic canton of Berne, without desire of territorial aggrandisement. At a personal level, it was in Lausanne and the surrounding countryside that he found intellectual fulfilment and the first lasting friendships among his contemporaries. During the course of his three extended periods of residence, his friendships matured, reflecting on his side his change in fortune from being an exile in lodgings to the historian of established fame with an estate of his own. He was remarkably loyal to his early friends in Lausanne and became the confidant of their children in the latest period. As well as fulfilling his social requirements, the cosmopolitan culture of the leading Lausannois families provided access to

French and German scholarship more readily than could be found in London.

Because *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is so much the major composition of Gibbon, discussion of the Swiss influence on it might have made Chapter 8 unduly long in relation to the others. My chosen course has therefore been to discuss instances where Gibbon's experience of Switzerland has influenced his judgement in the *History* as opportunities have occurred in the previous chapters, drawing attention to parallels (for example in ideas expressed in the early *Journal de mon voyage* and the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*) to ideas more developed in his mature work. This has enabled me to focus in Chapter 8 on the influence of Switzerland on his political philosophy and on the effect of his residence in Lausanne on the composition of the later chapters. The preparation of a new abridgement *The Decline and Fall*, edited by Dr. Antony Lentin and myself, and published in 1998 by Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, has enabled me to keep note of any possible allusions to his experience of Switzerland in the text. Examples of parallel ideas and influences range from the specific to the speculative, but my aim has been to omit anything which seems too tenuous.

There have also been problems of proportion and relevance arising from the current interest in Gibbon and Empire.⁴ The subject of empires and universal monarchy is relevant to Gibbon's views on early Swiss history but there was a danger that it might cause too long a digression from the

4. As instanced at the conference under the auspices of the Royal Historical Society at Gibbon's college of Magdalen, Oxford, in January 1994 as part of the bicentenary celebrations of his death; the book which has resulted from the conference is entitled *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, edited by Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

subject of Swiss influence on *The Decline and Fall* in Chapter 8. There was a need there, however, to establish the different meaning that Britain's maritime empire had for Gibbon from that of the empires of Augustus or of Charles the Fifth of Spain. It was convenient also to show that Gibbon did not cease to be loyal to the interests of Britain when he went to live in Switzerland.

It may be useful to note that I have not attempted on the grounds of relevance to discuss major influences on the historian, such as his career as a member of Parliament and of the government of Lord North, nor, at the end of his life, the outbreak of the French Revolution. Much more relevant to his experience of Switzerland was his career in the Hampshire militia, in that it enabled him to appreciate the greater efficiency of the organisation of the Swiss militia.

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In quotations from Gibbon's writings in French, I have used, except where otherwise stated, the punctuation and accentuation adopted by authorities such as Norton in her edition of the *Letters* and Bonnard in his edition of the *Memoirs*. The eccentricity of Gibbon's practice in using capital letters and accents, which changed over a period of years, can be disconcerting but has significant implications for the dating of his manuscripts, especially that of *The Letter on the Government of Berne*. By closely examining his use of the acute and grave accents on the letter "e", it has been possible to demonstrate for the first time that *The Letter* was

written in the 1750's. It has been necessary at times, therefore, to quote from the original manuscripts in the British Museum to help in establishing the date of that *Letter* and, more generally, in fixing the chronological order of his compositions.

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My interest in Gibbon was first aroused at school by an English master who liked to include Gibbon's *Memoirs* in his curriculum. That interest has been sustained in the intervening years by the devotion and quality of scholarship that Gibbon has attracted from such different writers as J. Meredith Read, D. M. Low, Georges Bonnard and Jane Norton, to name only those devotees who are no longer active in Gibbon research. Visits to the places that Gibbon frequented in Switzerland, the enthusiasm of Open University students who have attended my study tours on the shores of Lake Geneva, and the opportunity of close familiarity with *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* during the preparation of the abridgement of the *History* for Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, have all helped to give me a new perspective of the Swiss influence on Gibbon.

I am indebted to Dr. Lentin of The Open University for his encouragement and comments in writing this thesis, and to Professor Rawson of Yale University and Dr. Anne Laurence of The Open University for their comments when it was first submitted. I am also grateful for the support of the staff of The London Library and of the Archives Cantonales Vaudoises at Lausanne. For allowing me to test my ideas in print, I would

like to thank Donald W. Nichol and Margarete Smith of Memorial University of Newfoundland who published my paper on 'Gibbon at Lausanne', presented at the 1992 conference of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, in the society's journal, *Lumen*, Volume XIII, 1994.

1 GIBBON'S FIRST STAY IN LAUSANNE

Such as I am in Genius or learning or in manners, I owe my creation to Lausanne: it was in that school, that the statue was discovered in the block of marble...⁵

When recalling his enforced residence in Lausanne from the summer of 1753 to April 1758, Gibbon distinguishes in his *Memoirs* three distinct phases in his intellectual development. The first consists of his pupilage to Pavillard,⁶ the sympathetic pastor and academic with whom he lived throughout his stay in Lausanne. In this first phase, Gibbon is instructed and guided in his return to Protestantism, in his learning of the French language, and in the Latin classics. This period ends shortly after his readmission into the Protestant communion in Lausanne Cathedral at Christmas, 1754.⁷

The second phase from March to December 1755 is identified by Gibbon in the *Memoirs* and in the *Journal*, begun in 1761,⁸ as a period in

5. *Memoirs*, p. 86.

6. I have followed the established practice of spelling Pavillard in this way rather than "Pavilliard" which was Gibbon's way, and also Pavillard's in his letters to Gibbon's father in deference, apparently, to the English spelling.

7. 'Gibbon's Apostasy' is the subject of D. J. Womersley's article in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 11 No. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 51-70. Gibbon confirms that it was in the Cathedral that he received the sacrament on Christmas Day, 1754, in the draft known as Memoir C in *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, edited and published by John Murray, London, 1896, p. 228.

8. *Journal A*.

which he made the most remarkable progress. He sees himself then as having mastered the French and Latin languages. In philosophy, he had been studying the logic of de Crousaz⁹ which 'prepared me to engage with his master Locke and his antagonist Bayle'¹⁰ and 'formed my mind to a habit of thinking and reasoning I had no idea of before.'¹¹ The author, however, who gives him most delight is Montesquieu, in whom Gibbon sees the 'energy of style, and boldness of hypothesis' ... to awaken and stimulate the Genius of the Age.'¹² At the end of this short second phase, although he continues to learn from the teaching of others; with Pavillard in his early studies of Greek and with a professor of mathematics¹³ at the Academy in learning the elements of algebra and geometry, Gibbon has graduated and is able to generate his own development in his main studies. He has also acquired an adult ability to judge affairs and situations as evidenced in his account of the Swiss tour of September/October 1755.¹⁴

Thereafter, during the third phase of twenty-seven months from the beginning of 1756 to his departure from Lausanne in the spring of 1758, from the age of eighteen to nearly twenty-one, Gibbon becomes a man of the world. In his Latin studies he takes on the role of a textual expert, corresponding in Latin and French with the professors of Zurich, Göttingen

9. Jean-Pierre de Crousaz de Mézery, 1663-1750, the adversary of Pope, whose *Système de Réflexions ... ou Nouvel Essai de Logique* had first appeared in 1712. Writing to his father on 10th January 1756, Gibbon boasted: 'J'ai achevé la Logique de Monsieur de Crousaz laquelle est fort estimée dans ce pays-ci en partie avec Mons: Pavilliard et en partie dans mon Particulier.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 12.)

10. *Memoirs*, p. 78. As Low comments in his introduction to *Journal A*, p. lvi, 'method and regularity, which had been so wanting in his life, were made part and parcel of his nature.'

11. *Journal A*, p. 5.

12. *Memoirs*, p. 78.

13. Théodore-Louis de Treytorrens, 1726-94.

14. Entitled *Journal de mon voyage dans quelques endroits de la Suisse* and referred to subsequently in abbreviation as *Journal de mon voyage*. It is printed in *Miscellanea* and is edited by G. R. de Beer and G. A. Bonnard. In Add. Mss. 34,875, it consists of 28 pages in Gibbon's handwriting and 9 in a copyist's.

and Paris. Inspired by his reading of Locke, he enters into philosophical discussions and correspondence with a free-thinking Vaudois pastor, François-Louis Allamand. He is exposed to the society of Lausanne, provincial insofar as it was subservient to Berne but enlivened by the presence of Voltaire, and he has the satisfaction of meeting this 'most extraordinary man of the age'¹⁵ and seeing him perform in his plays. The effect was to give him a taste for the French theatre which caused him to have less regard for the genius of Shakespeare than he might otherwise have had. From this time also dates his first lasting friendship with a man of similar age, Georges Deyverdun, and his first and only deep experience of romantic attachment, when he determined to marry Suzanne Curchod. His enforced stay in Lausanne had become one of the most exhilarating periods of his life, giving him the confidence, before his departure from Switzerland in April 1758, to start his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* which became in 1761 his first publication.

By 1758, therefore, Gibbon was well informed on Swiss life and manners. There is no reason to doubt, as some nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians have, his ability at this stage in his intellectual development to write a political tract such as *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, which is the subject of Chapter 2. By the age of twenty-one, the experience of Lausanne originally intended to return him to Protestantism had turned Gibbon into a fully fledged scholar and observer of human affairs. Gibbon might have been describing himself in 1758 when he wrote in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*:

Mais que cette vie seroit triste, que cette fortune me seroit à charge, si

15. *Memoirs*, p. 82.

expatrié dès ma tendre jeunesse, votre pays n'eut pas formé mon gout et ma raison à des mœurs moins grossières que les nôtres!¹⁶

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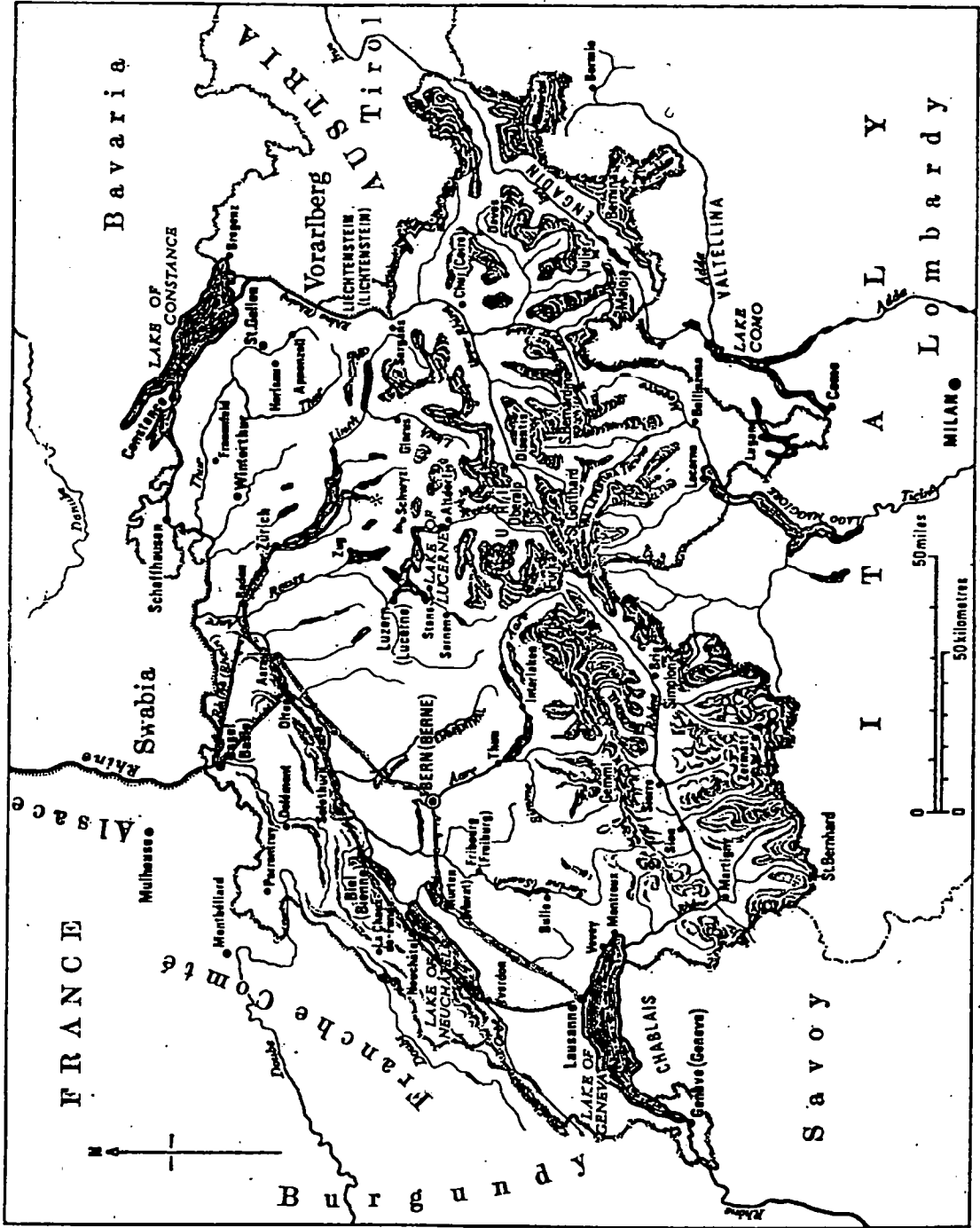
*

The remainder of this chapter aims to show the skills in analysis and the attitude of mind that Gibbon had already acquired by the time that he wrote his *Journal de mon voyage* at the age of eighteen. The tour of the northern cantons of Switzerland in the autumn of 1755 was probably a reward for the progress he had made and was undertaken in the company of Pavillard and his wife. Gibbon had obtained his father's permission for this holiday,¹⁷ which was also well-suited to the Pavillards' interests, as Mme Pavillard was glad to use the opportunity for visiting and staying with her sister in Aarau en route. Certainly it was a successful experience for Gibbon, showing him the value of travelling with Pavillard as a guide. Perhaps the main lasting benefit for him were the meetings they had in Zurich with Professor Breitingen, with whom he later corresponded; with Johann-Anton Tillier, a leading statesman of Berne, in Baden; and with the outstanding Swiss representative of the Enlightenment, Albrecht von Haller¹⁸ in Berne. In an undated letter to Gibbon's father after the tour, Pavillard wrote also of its value in confirming Gibbon's return to Protestantism: 'Le petit voiage que nous avons fait lui a beaucoup valu à cet

16. Add. Mss. 34,882, using Gibbon's accentuation or lack of it.

17. As revealed in a letter of Gibbon to his aunt, Catherine Porten, of 20th September 1755. (*Letters*, Vol. i, pp. 6-10.)

18. To indicate the European reputation of this academic, G. R. de Beer in *Gibbon and his world*, London, 1968, p. 135, writes: 'Haller wrote the first poem on the Alps, was the first Professor of Anatomy and Botany in George II's new University of Göttingen, was the founder of physiology as an experimental science, published the first flora of Switzerland, instituted a new method of bibliography, and was one of the greatest scholars of the eighteenth century. Gibbon's visit to him in Berne must have been an inspiration.' Gibbon in *Journal de mon voyage* refers to his 'savoir immense' and 'embonpoint excessif.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 60.)



GIBBON'S ITINERARY IN 1755

- outward journey to Einsiedeln* and return to Baden
- - - return journey via Basle and Berne to Lausanne

egard; il a été témoin des superstitions épouvantables qui y regnent...'¹⁹

The tour had begun on 21st September 1755. They travelled by carriage via Yverdon and Grandson, reaching Neuchâtel on the second day. Soon after leaving Neuchâtel, Gibbon noted they were in a country where German was spoken²⁰ and where the peasants lived and dressed differently. They went via Bienne, Soleurre and Aarau to Baden on 28th September. They reached Zurich on the 30th and made what was for Gibbon a most impressionable visit, by litter because the roads were too bad for a wheeled carriage, to the Abbey of Einsiedeln on 1st October. They returned the next day to Zurich for a further four days, before moving on to Brugg and then to Basle for two days. From there they returned to Aarau where they stayed for two and a half days with the married sister of Mme Pavillard. They left Aarau on 13th October, stopping the night at Morgenthal and visiting the Abbey of St. Urban on the next day. They reached Berne on the 15th, where they stayed four days and Gibbon wrote nearly four pages on its government. Finally, they stopped one more night at Payerne before returning to Lausanne on 20th October.

When recalling the tour over thirty years later in his *Memoirs*, Gibbon selected for special notice his visit to the Abbey at Einsiedeln.

I was astonished by the profuse ostentation of riches in the poorest corner of Europe: amidst a savage scene of woods and mountains, a palace appears to have been erected by Magic; and it *was* erected by the potent magic of Religion. A crowd of palmers and votaries was prostrate before the Altar: the title and worship of the mother of God provoked my indignation; and the lively naked image of superstition suggested to me, as in the same place it had done to Zuinglius, the

19. Add. Mss. 34,887.

20 Craddock has missed this observation in her account of the tour in her *Young Edward Gibbon*, Baltimore and London, 1982, where after commenting on his omission to stress the antiquity of Soleurre she adds: 'We may be surprised, too, that Gibbon failed to comment on the change of language.' (p.80.)

most pressing argument for the reformation of the Church.²¹

Gibbon did not have the manuscript of the *Journal de mon voyage* when he wrote his *Memoirs*, but his memory recalled accurately the impressions recorded at the time of his visit, even though it was as a long-established rationalist instead of a recently reformed Protestant that he remembered the experience.

He used four pages of his *Journal* to describe the surroundings, the history and the buildings of Einsiedeln. His description of the wild scenery of the canton of Schwyz indicates how awesome it was to the young Gibbon's mind.²² He is struck by the 'horreur de la perspective' in the forests. At first, he wonders why such surroundings should have been chosen by the founders of the Abbey. On reflection, however, he recognises that they would know that such a scene of precipices and dark forests would fill the minds of monks and pilgrims with holy veneration. Gibbon already thinks of the pagan parallel with early Christianity.

Ils se souvenoient pourquoi les Pretres Payens avoient placé les parties de leur culte les plus sacrées et les plus mystérieuses, dans le fond des antres et des bois.²³

When he came to write in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* about the religion of the German tribes before the barbarian invasions of the

²¹ *Memoirs*, p. 80. Zwingli had been a curate at Einsiedeln from 1516 to 1518.

²² Gibbon's language shows clearly the difference in his concept of "nature" from ours when he contrasts the pleasant, populated, cultivated hills of the Zurich countryside with the forest mountains of Schwyz, 'un pays également abandonné par l'art et par la nature.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 27.)

²³ *Miscellanea*, pp. 27-8, where Gibbon's idiosyncratic use and omission of accents are retained. Norton, in *Letters*, Vol. I, p. xvii, comments: 'The regular accenting of the three kinds of 'e' was adopted by the Académie in 1740, but the accepted usage was for long not very well known to the general public, less perhaps in Switzerland than in France.' It must be added that Gibbon diverges more from modern practice than does the copyist, who wrote the last nine pages of the manuscript in Add. Mss. 34,875.

Empire, he thought of a similar scenery and a similar motivation:

The only temples in Germany were dark and ancient groves, consecrated by the reverence of succeeding generations. Their secret gloom, the imagined residence of an invisible power, by presenting no distinct object of fear or worship, impressed the mind with a still deeper sense of religious horror; and the priests, rude and illiterate as they were, had been taught by experience the use of every artifice that could preserve and fortify impressions so well suited to their own interest.²⁴

Nor were the unexceptional circumstances of the origin of the Abbey lost on the young Gibbon, enabling him to indulge in an early example of his characteristic irony at the expense of Christianity. The remote situation of the Abbey had been determined by the murder there in the ninth century of an anchorite called Meinrad,

qui y avait été martyrisé, c'est à dire tué par des voleurs; car dans ce tems-là tous les Ecclesiastiques qui perissoient par des morts violentes, étoient autant de Martyres.²⁵

Gibbon goes on to describe the miraculous history of the Abbey, using a guide printed at Einsiedeln under the licence of the Abbot. So many are the number of miracles performed there that he regards the book as the height of superstition.

Si les moines n'eussent pas connu la trempe de ceux avec qui ils avoient affaire, jamais ils n'auroient osé mettre au jour une production aussi contraire au bon sens et la raison.²⁶

Here can already be seen the mind of the mature Gibbon reacting to a tale of

24. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, pp. 247-8, where Gibbon reveals in a footnote that he knows of the description of a sacred wood near Marseilles by the poet Lucan (AD 39-65) but remarks there were many similar in 'Germany' which would surely include for Gibbon the forest lands of the Swiss mountain cantons. In his *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses*, he wrote: 'Vers la fin du treizième siècle, la Suisse étoit encore une province de L'empire d'Allemagne.' (*Misc. Works*, p. 240.)

25. *Miscellanea*, p.28.

26. A fuller account of the miracles at Einsiedeln based on 'histories published under the authority of the monks' is contained in the first edition of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland*, 1838, p.185. (Victorian Library edition published in 1970 by Leicester University Press).

miracles with an understanding of the ecclesiastical manipulation of superstition and the pecuniary interest involved.

Gibbon continues his *Journal de mon voyage* with a factual account of the Abbey, its treasures and buildings. He is impressed most by the wealth of the place and the ostentation of its Treasury, (which was to be plundered by the French in 1798.) He is aware that the source of this wealth were the many pilgrims who came from all the cantons of Switzerland and from the neighbouring states of Venice, Milan, Savoy, Franche-Comté, Lorraine, Alsace, Swabia, Bavaria, and the Tyrol. More than 80,000 were expected in 1755, a special year because of the feast of the dedication of the Church which occurred every four years. He was to write of the value of Jubilees, or Holy Years, for sustaining the revenue of the Church in Rome in Chapter LXIX of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.²⁷ The monks at Einsiedeln to secure their revenue had laid down the minimum offering which a pilgrim should make. 'Jugez quelles richesses il y doivent apporter.'²⁸ As illustrated above, the same thought about the profusion of riches amidst such a wilderness occurred to Gibbon so much later when

27. Vol. VII, pp. 255-8, where Gibbon concludes his account of the financial benefits to Rome of Jubilees in the Middle Ages with a sense of benign resignation: 'The profusion of indulgences, the revolt of the Protestants, and the decline of superstition have much diminished the value of the jubilee; yet even the nineteenth and last festival was a year of pleasure and profit to the Romans; and a philosophic smile will not disturb the triumph of the priest or the happiness of the people.'

28. *Miscellanea*, p.30. The *Journal de mon voyage* throughout its thirty seven pages reads as if addressed to any interested stranger to Switzerland. Gibbon appeals to the reader for his agreement or for his forgiveness when he becomes aware that he has strayed from his subject because of a specialist interest or when he feels he cannot do justice to a subject, such as his description of Einsiedeln, without abusing his reader's patience. Gibbon, however, assures us in his *Memoirs* (p. 80) that the *Journal* was intended for his father 'as a proof that my time and his money had not been misspent.' Pavillard was an interested party and may well have encouraged Gibbon to keep up to date with it. Gibbon sent the *Journal* with a covering letter, now missing (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 11), to his father, who acknowledged receiving it without any comment on 14th or 24th December, 1755. (Add. Mss. 34,886.) Gibbon did not find it among his father's papers after his death and, as mentioned above, did not have a copy available when writing his *Memoirs*. Although there are references to it among the papers of Lord Sheffield in drafts of a table of material for the second edition of *The Miscellaneous Works*, it was not included in that edition and remained unpublished in full until 1952. (*Miscellanea*, pp. 7-8.)

writing his *Memoirs*.

In the descriptions of Einsiedeln at the beginning and the end of his writing career, Gibbon shows that he held at an early date after his reconversion from Roman Catholicism and continued to hold the characteristically Protestant aversion to religious ostentation at the expense of the devout. Already, too, in the record of 1755, there is the imagination in play of the rationalist who sees at Einsiedeln 'le comble de la Superstition, le Chef d'Oeuvre de la Politique Ecclesiastique et la honte de l'humanité.'²⁹

Also revealing of his personality at this time are his remarks on Swiss ways of life. Gibbon had evidently a good eye for trade and industry, being particularly impressed by Zurich in these respects. Unlike the citizens of Berne, the Zuricois have a preference for commerce and manufactures to military service abroad. They do not subscribe to the idea that a gentleman dishonours himself as soon as he becomes useful to society. In Zurich, there is a silk factory belonging to Monsieur Escher:

En verité elle est merveilleuse. Figurez vous une grande maison de quatres Etages, percée de haut en bas par six Roues d'une grandeur immense qui font tourner huit mille six cent soixante huit bobines.³⁰

The attention to detail is reminiscent of Johnson on his journey to the western islands of Scotland or John Howard describing the interior of prisons. He goes on to outline the economic consequences of increased use of water power, with an analysis that would have satisfied Adam Smith. Instead of creating unemployment, M. Escher had been able to double production,

29. *Miscellanea*, p. 33.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

re-deploy labour, and find enough financial credit to obtain the monopoly of the silk industry.

Gibbon is realistic in his observations. Zurich with about 28,000 inhabitants during the day is larger than its actual number of residents,³¹ because many workmen come in from the surrounding areas. The Zuricois are for the most part hard-working, sober and alert. They preserve their simplicity of manners and are very independent and do little business with foreigners; and that accounts for their not acquiring that 'politesse, dont nous nous vantons tant mais qui leur donne en échange des vertus bien plus estimables.'³² This is an early example of his appreciation of utilitarian values and their association with independence and freedom which was to influence Gibbon the historian. Such insight owed its origin to his experience of Swiss frugality and practicality.

Gibbon in his humane, balanced observations at the age of eighteen shows an obvious regard for the Zuricois. They hold on to simple old-fashioned values. He was to recall these when he wrote of Arnold of Brescia finding 'a safe and hospitable shelter in Zurich' in the twelfth century, after preaching the separation of spiritual and secular authority.³³ They have many political and commercial advantages over the other cantons. It is Zurich, for example, that convokes the Diets; its deputies take precedence over others and foreign powers wishing to negotiate about Swiss affairs

31. The estimate for inhabitants of Zurich is as low as 14,500 in Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland*, 1838, p. 24.

32. *Miscellanea*, p. 35.

33. In Chapter LXIX of *The Decline and Fall*, where Gibbon describes Zurich as having grown into 'a free and flourishing city...In an age less ripe for reformation, the precursor of Zuinglius was heard with applause; a brave and simple people imbibed, and long retained, the colour of his opinions...' (Vol. VII, pp. 230/1).

address themselves to Zurich. Gibbon refers again to the 'simplicité' of the Zuricois when he arrives at Basle and describes its inhabitants as having 'le juste milieu entre la trop grande simplicité de Zurich et la politesse François de Berne ou de Soleurre.'³⁴ However, the Zuricois are poorer than the Bernois because they have not sequestered the wealth of the Church; much of the revenue of the Church in fact goes to foreign ecclesiastics, and Gibbon recalls that Einsiedeln contributes to that situation.³⁵

Elsewhere in the northern cantons, he observes the dress and conditions of the peasants, commenting that the English regard the Swiss as poor but he does not know where can be found in England the social equivalents of some prosperous peasants near Berne.³⁶ Gibbon asks several persons including the lieutenant of a company of dragoons in the local militia about the cause of their wealth and concludes that it may be attributed to the textile industry, to their livestock and, above all, to their thrift and good management. They have no wish to alter their social status, even though the seigneurs of Berne may be interested in their daughters for their dowries.

During the same decade as Rousseau was challenging the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Hume about the benefits of industry and trade improving the manners of urbanised populations, Gibbon shows through his own observations that he is a believer in *doux commerce*. This was the

34. *Miscellanea*, p. 41.

35. Gibbon records that a person employed in one of the abbeys told them in Zurich that 'ces Messieurs (les Ecclesiastiques Etrangers) tiroient annuellement du Canton, tous fraix faits, Cent mille Francs en especes.' (*Miscellanea*, p.34.)

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1: Gibbon vividly describes a peasant in a sentence: 'Il a de beaux chevaux mais il les mene a la charrue.'

theory that material life was sweetened and made comfortable for human beings through economic trade, and human intercourse became more gentle and polite as a result. In *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu had written 'the spirit of commerce brings with it the spirit of frugality, economy, moderation, work, wisdom, tranquillity, order and rule.'³⁷ Whereas Rousseau's reflections on the social divisions in Geneva were leading him into the opposite view that economic interests undermined the social republic, Gibbon's travels in Switzerland provided him with evidence which helped to form a lasting belief in the political and social benefits of a modern economy. Later he was to contrast, in his chapter on the state of Germany in the time of Tacitus, the nature of a savage with a civilised state and identify 'the great chain of mutual dependence' in the latter, in which 'the most numerous portion...are employed in constant and useful labour.'³⁸

Gibbon is also keen to show his interest in political and constitutional issues, matters which might more interest his father. With an intriguing reference to the political problems in Europe preceding the Seven Years War, Gibbon mentions that he was unable to have an audience with the French ambassador to the Swiss cantons who resided in Soleure, because of 'La circonstance critique des affaires entre la France et la Grande Bretagne' in that year.³⁹ He divides the thirteen cantons into two classes: six where everyone has equal rights to government which he calls 'tout a fait Democratiques,' and seven where the principal towns govern through

'Baillifs' appointed from the number of magistrates and are more or less

³⁷ Quoted by Helena Rosenblatt in *Rousseau and Geneva from the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749-1762*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 56.

³⁸ *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 238.

³⁹ *Miscellanea*, p. 19. Relations between the two countries were to deteriorate still further with the outbreak of The Seven Years War in 1756.

aristocratic.⁴⁰ He goes into constitutional details, especially when his curiosity is aroused by the complexity of electoral processes at Berne for the filling of vacancies on the Great and Little Councils, or by apparent anomalies in administrative or legal arrangements. He notes, for example, an oddity of this sort at Aarau in the canton of Berne. In matters of civil law there is the right of appeal to Berne but in criminal cases their councils have the privilege of last resort.

Leur Petit Conseil composé de 26 personnes juge en première instance. En cas d'Appel, on les porte devant le Grand, qui est composé des 26 Membres du petit et de 22 Autres. De façon que ceux qui ont déjà jugé, sont la pluralité du Tribunal qui doit confirmer ou corriger ce qu'ils ont fait."⁴¹

At Grandson, close to Yverdon on the shore of Lake Neuchâtel, Gibbon is impressed by the balance of power maintained by the cantons of Berne and Fribourg: each appoints a bailiff for five years alternatively; when the bailiff is from Berne, judicial appeals are sent to Fribourg, and vice versa. Miscarriages of justice would thus be heard in an opposing canton of a different religion, Berne being Protestant and Fribourg Catholic. Gibbon enjoys the irony of this situation:

Frein admirable contre la tyrannie et l'avarice de ces Gouverneurs qui savent, qu'à la moindre malversation qu'ils commettent, il (sic) auront pour Juges des gens d'un Etat ennemi du leur par politique et par religion, et qui seront toujours charmés de faire parade de leur équité, et de se concilier l'affection de leurs sujets par la punition d'une personne qui ne tient à eux en rien.⁴²

Gibbon thus keenly appreciates constitutional problems and how they can be controlled with legal niceties.

40. *Miscellanea*, p. 16.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

When he was in Baden, he had the good fortune to meet two senior statesmen from Berne who were arbitrating in a dispute between the Abbot of St. Gall and his Protestant subjects of the valley of Toggenburg. The issue concerned the military duties of the inhabitants in regiments raised by the abbots for service abroad and was a demonstration for Gibbon of surviving feudal interests, involving religious and military aspects. The two statesmen, Johann-Anton Tillier, Avoyer⁴³ of Berne from 1754 to 1771, and B  at-Sigmund Ougsbourger, elected Banneret⁴⁴ in 1754, were members of a deputation representing Berne, Zurich and the Abbot of St. Gall, and were staying at the same hostel as Gibbon and the Pavillards. Gibbon writes in his *Journal de mon voyage* that they insisted on sharing their table with them and gave them several introductions for their visit to Zurich and elsewhere.⁴⁵

From the evidence of the detailed account of the negotiated settlement in the *Journal*, Gibbon must have been an avid listener to their conversation. The penetration of his assessment of the situation can be seen in his concluding remarks about who will carry out the judgement if the 'Tockenbourgeois' do not like it.

Ils sont 25, a 30,000 hommes bons soldats, et resolu de defendre jusqu'a la derniere goutte de leur sang ce qu'ils regardent comme leurs privileges les plus sacres. Si encore ils alloient implorer quelque

43. In his detailed account of the constitution of Berne in the *Journal de mon voyage*, Gibbon explains that Berne had two Avoyers, comparing them with Roman consuls; they were appointed for life but each ruled for one year alternately.

44. Elected, as Gibbon records, for four years. There were four B  annerets, described by Gibbon as having the role of 'Conservateur des Loix'. Together with the Avoyer out of office and two counsellors, they formed 'Le Conseil Secret' at Berne which Gibbon likens to the Council of Ten at Venice: although it did not act with the severity of that, he remarks that it was accountable only to God. (*Miscellanea*, p. 57.)

45. *Ibid*, p. 23.

secours étranger quelles conséquences cette affaire ne pourroit elle point avoir pour toute la Suisse?⁴⁶

The imagination of the eighteen-year-old Gibbon is set alight by this discussion of current affairs with two of the negotiators. Clearly Gibbon appreciated the value of this contact with such important ministers of state and made the most of the opportunity to immerse himself in Swiss affairs.

As will be discussed more fully in later chapters, Gibbon always showed a lively interest in Swiss history and in the *Journal de mon voyage* he records the events which have made famous the places that he passes through. When he arrives at Grandson on the first day of the tour, he is mindful of the battle which took place outside the town in 1476, in which the Swiss confederates defeated Charles the Bold of Burgundy.⁴⁷ He is reminded then of a quotation from Sallust distinguishing the Romans from the Greeks for being more concerned with taking action than writing about their exploits afterwards. The Swiss too had made more use of the pike than the pen. He notices the great quantities of arms in the city arsenals. The Swiss are certainly the most well-armed nation in the world.⁴⁸ On the way to Berne, a monument with a Latin inscription attracts his attention because of its associations with Britain and he notes some significant mistakes in its historical facts.⁴⁹ Later he describes the remains of Roman buildings at

46. *Miscellanea*, p. 25.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 64. Gibbon asserts this was true in his own time as well as historically: '...avant qu'un homme puisse se marier, il est obligé d'apporter une attestation signée par le ministre de son endroit, comme quoi il a les armes, et équipage complet pour un Fantassin.'

49. Craddock in the Appendix to *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, pp.305-307, shows how he recorded these errors in his "Common Place Book" of 1755 after returning to Lausanne. The manuscript of this note book, consisting of some 156 pages, is in Add. Mss. 34.880 and is described on the title page by Gibbon: 'In which I propose to write what I find most remarkable in my (readings) Historical Readings / Begun at Lausanne. March 19 1755'. The word in brackets is deleted by Gibbon, the substituted words indicating the direction which his studies were taking. The title and description are repeated below in French, the title being translated "Recueil".

Avenches which he connects with Aventicum mentioned by Tacitus.⁵⁰ All ages and aspects of Swiss history interest him, and at Zurich he notes that the study of Swiss history has been well developed, with a chair specially established for it in their Academy,⁵¹ commenting 'Etablissement qu'il seroit a souhaiter qu'on eut par tout'.⁵²

As he travels among the sites and monuments of early Switzerland, Gibbon shows an interest in the written materials of its history which would later cause him to seek out ancient manuscripts when he decides to write his Swiss History. He describes the contents of libraries of monasteries and is particularly interested in the Reformation documents at Zurich resulting from the temporary asylum there of English Protestants in the sixteenth century. He meets the librarian, Professor Breiting, 'le Savant Bibliothecaire de Zurich',⁵³ with whom he was to open a correspondence a year later. Evidently Gibbon is a keen observer for Breiting shows him one of the oldest manuscripts, a Greek Psalter on purple vellum with silver lettering. Gibbon is also shown a Bible of the time of Charlemagne which has a note in it by Lacroze⁵⁴ about the omission of a disputed passage, a

50. *Miscellanea*, p. 66. An early reference to Tacitus for Gibbon. In the *Memoirs*, he refers to devouring the translation of Gordon along with translations of Herodotus and Xenophon before he went to Oxford (pp. 41-2); it was not until 1756 that he read through the works of Tacitus in Latin. (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 23.)

51. Gibbon remarks that the current professor, Johann-Jacob Bodmer (1698-1783), was also distinguished for his German poetry. (*Miscellanea*, p. 37.)

52. Gibbon's comment clearly shows the importance which he gave to the national schools of history at this early stage of his career. Michel Baridon, in his *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, Paris, 1977, p.56, draws attention to the remark seeing it as reflective of advanced interest in national schools of thought and art, such as Hogarth's view of his art as being specifically English within the Dutch republican bourgeois tradition. Baridon goes on to relate this early interest of Gibbon in national history to his later projects on the history of Florence under the Medicis, the history of the Swiss cantons and, at the end of his life, the compilation of a survey of historians of England.

53. *Miscellanea*, p.37.

54. The librarian of Frederick the Great; Gibbon describes him as 'ce fameux Critique'. (*Ibid.*, p. 36.)

curiosity which Gibbon verifies for himself.⁵⁵

He prefers the library of the Abbey of St. Urbain in the canton of Lucerne to that of Einsiedeln because it includes the late seventeenth and eighteenth century works of Graevius, Gronovius, Montfaucon and Muratori on the antiquities of Italy and Greece, and books on Byzantine history. Many of these volumes were later to be in his library at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne⁵⁶ and were to be among the main sources of information for his studies on the Grand Tour⁵⁷ and for *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. At the end of Chapter LXX of *The Decline and Fall* Gibbon was to list the works of Muratori whom he described as 'my guide and master in the history of Italy'.⁵⁸ Already, at the age of eighteen, he is aware of the importance of these works, revealing how his knowledge had developed since his introduction to the English sources of Roman and Byzantine history at Stourhead and at Bath in the summer of 1751.⁵⁹ He also belies a subsequent remark in his *Journal* of 1763⁶⁰ that the study of medals was then a new science for him by showing an informed interest in the Abbey of St. Urbain's medal collection, noting a representation of the Emperor Tiberius which he knows to be rare because of a comment that he

55. It is a great pity that Gibbon did not visit the library of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gall, originally founded by the Irish missionary Gallus in 612, which reached the height of its religious, intellectual and economic fame in the ninth century.

56. The catalogue in *Keynes* lists 33 volumes of L. A. Muratori's works in Gibbon's Lausanne Library, 23 of which were at Bentinck Street; 16 volumes of B. de Montfaucon's works, of which 11 were at Bentinck Street; 27 volumes of the Paris edition, 1698-1702, of the *Corpus Byzantinae historiae* at Bentinck Street and 23 volumes of the Venice second edition, 1729-33, at Lausanne.

57. The *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum* of J.-G. Graevius, 1632-1703, was extensively used by Gibbon during his second stay in Lausanne, as will be shown in Chapter 5.

58. Footnote 110 of Chapter LXX, Vol. VII, pp. 311-2, where Gibbon also comments: 'In all his works, Muratori proves himself a diligent and laborious writer, who aspires above the prejudices of a Catholic priest'. There was no sense of complaint in his use of the word 'laborious' as can be seen in his reference to Muratori's compilation of information on mediæval towers in Italy as 'laborious and entertaining', Vol. VII, p. 326.

59. *Memoirs*, pp. 42-3.

60. *Miscellanea*, p. 98. See page 94 below.

remembers in Addison's *Remarks on several parts of Italy*.⁶¹

One of the most significant developments in Gibbon's education attributable to the tour was the correspondence with Professor Breitingger. It began tentatively, one year after the visit to Zurich, and Gibbon does not reveal his identity and his visit to him with Pavillard until his third letter. There are five extant letters from Gibbon, the first dated 15th October 1756 and the last 18th October 1757, to which Breitingger is known to have replied with four, of which one is missing.⁶² Although predominantly concerned with textual emendations suggested by Gibbon, the correspondence reveals a developing trust between them, Gibbon seeking help from Breitingger on behalf of an unidentified friend for the publication of a book review and Breitingger in turn seeking Gibbon's aid in an enquiry about the printing of a book in translation in Lausanne. Gibbon refers to a visitation from Berne of Haller and von Bonstetten, a member of the Petit Conseil, concerning the orthodoxy of the teaching of the Academy and Church in Lausanne, and also to the presence of Voltaire in Lausanne and the performance there of his plays. Gibbon gave his own view of the worth of the correspondence in his *Memoirs*:

I proposed my interpretations and amendments: his censures, for he did not spare my boldness of conjecture, were sharp and strong; and I was encouraged by the consciousness of my strength, when I could stand in free debate against a Critic of such eminence and erudition.⁶³

The confidence gained from this correspondence would have contributed to the decision to write the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, begun in March

61. *Miscellanea*, p. 49.

62. The correspondence, entirely in Latin, is reviewed by D. M. Low in Appendix I of *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 387-90. Low concludes that Gibbon's Latin was 'fluent but faulty' and that he was a child of his time as was Breitingger in his scholarship; nevertheless he feels that a 'final salute of admiration must be paid to the acuteness and learning displayed in these letters, revealing an early promise of genius hard to parallel.'

63. *Memoirs*, p. 81.

1758, and there is evidence of this in the justification that Gibbon gave to Breitinger for continuing the correspondence when he revealed his identity by referring to his visit to him in Zurich: 'Pauci sunt in hoc quo vivimus saeculo non modo qui Litteras colunt sed et qui diligunt, ne pauciores fiant sua culpa.'⁶⁴ One of the main reasons for undertaking his first published work was the belief that in his century there was less interest in the literature of antiquity and less concern that it should decline.

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This account of Gibbon's interests in religious, social, constitutional, historical and intellectual aspects of Switzerland in his *Journal de mon voyage* has been aimed at revealing his beliefs and attitudes at the age of eighteen at the end of the period of his formal education, when much of his outlook would have been conditioned by his residence in Switzerland. The itinerary of his Swiss tour had been chosen for him by the Pavillards, and he was dependent on the respect shown to Daniel Pavillard for the privilege of entering into conversation with scholars such as Breitinger. Greater freedom to choose his own society would come during the third phase of his first stay in Switzerland, the period in which *The Letter on the Government of Berne* can be most securely placed.

64. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 38.

2 THE LETTER ON THE GOVERNMENT OF BERNE

*Que vous manque til? la liberté: et privés d'elle, tout vous manque.*⁶⁵

The subject to which Gibbon devotes most attention in his *Journal de mon voyage*, after the description of Einsiedeln, is the constitution of Berne. Having lived in a dependent state or “bailliage” of Berne since May 1753, Gibbon was likely to have a special view of that city. Within the memory of the Pavillards, the aborted attempt of Major Davel peacefully to remove Lausanne from the rule of Berne had ended in his execution in 1723 and the re-assertion of Bernese authority. Gibbon was to refer to the event and the nature of the patriot favourably in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*. ‘Enthousiaste il est vrai, mais Enthousiaste pour le bien publique.’⁶⁶ This was a remarkably enlightened view of a man who had marched with his troops to Lausanne, apparently moved by his sense of patriotism without testing the climate of opinion, to negotiate the transfer of power from the Bernese authorities. His example, arrest and execution had failed to arouse the Lausannois. It was only in the last two decades of the eighteenth century with the growth of democratic fervour against aristocratic rule in the cantons that the memory of Davel was revived.⁶⁷

65. *Miscellanea*, p. 124. Quotations in this chapter from *The Letter* will use the accentuation and punctuation of the original manuscript in Add. Mss. 34,882.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

67. The monument to Davel before the Château St-Maire, the seat of the Bernese governors, dates from as late as 1898, a century after the liberation of the Pays de Vaud.

In his *Journal de mon voyage*, Gibbon describes how the canton of Berne was divided into some fifty bailliages, each under a bailiff who collected the revenues and administered justice. Appointments to the bailliages were made from members of the leading families of Berne according to the seniority of the candidates. These are the patrimonies of the Bernois, writes Gibbon,

souvent un homme de vingt ans faisant des depenses au dessus de ses forces, se console par l'esperance qu'un bon Balliage remediera a tout cela.⁶⁸

The Bernois are proud, even if individually they are very polite, because they are used to regarding Berne as the first city of the world, with its offices of state as the most worthy objectives of their careers.

In Gibbon's account of the constitution of Berne, there is a sustained criticism of a self-regarding bourgeoisie who have transformed their monopoly of power into an oligarchy of eighty ruling families. Berne had been free and independent in its constitution after its founding by Berchtold, Duke of Zaringue, in 1191. Even after the conquest of the Pays de Vaud at the time of the Reformation in 1536, more families were admitted into the bourgeoisie. At the end of the seventeenth century, however, a new attitude prevailed when membership of the bourgeoisie had become worth more. Residential, religious and financial qualifications were imposed and strictly observed. To aspire to any office of state, it was necessary to be a bourgeois of Berne. In relating this, Gibbon is reminded of Roman times when the Italian subject peoples of Rome, under the name of Allies (*socii*), had claimed Roman citizenship, resulting in the Social War and the loss of

68. *Miscellanea*, p.58.

300,000 lives. The Bernois have read history, why do they not realise the consequences of their actions? 'La reponse est facile mais delicate, c'est que la Cupidité particuliere éteint les lumieres de la raison.'⁶⁹

Here we have both the material for, and the tone of, Gibbon's "remonstrance" in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*.⁷⁰ As yet, the circumstances and the date of its composition have never been satisfactorily explained. Swiss commentators have attributed it to a later period of Gibbon's residence in Lausanne, seeing in it an impressively powerful argument for the independence of the Vaud from Berne, and refusing to believe that it could have been written by Gibbon as early as the 1750's;⁷¹ and yet the view of Lord Sheffield, its first publisher, was that it was probably written 'about the time of his first leaving Lausanne'.⁷² In this Chapter, new evidence from Gibbon's use of accents will demonstrate that his view was correct.

The Letter is written as if by a Swedish national exiled at an early age to the Pays de Vaud, 'mon autre patrie'.⁷³ Hence it is sometimes called the *Lettre d'un Suédois*.⁷⁴ It is a thin veil of disguise since the pretence is only maintained in the opening paragraph, but the idea of a letter from a Swede

69. *Miscellanea*, p. 53.

70. it is edited by L. Junod and printed in *Miscellanea*, pp. 123-41. In Add. Mss. 34,882, it consists of 14 pages in Gibbon's handwriting.

71. Junod, for example, in the Préface to his edition of *The Letter* writes: 'Il nous paraît difficile d'admettre que Gibbon, à l'âge de dix-sept ou dix-huit ans, ait été, malgré son génie, capable de composer un tableau si pénétrant et si perspicace du gouvernement bernois; mais, si nous excluons la date de 1756 pour la composition de cette lettre, parce que Gibbon aurait été décidément trop jeune, ne pourrait-on pas s'arrêter au second séjour de Gibbon à Lausanne, en 1763-1764?' (*Miscellanea*, p. 118.)

72. *Misc. Works*, Vol. II, p. 1. He had first met Gibbon in Lausanne in 1763, when Gibbon had returned there on his Grand Tour. The first reference by Gibbon in *Journal B* to John Holroyd, as Sheffield was called before his elevation to the peerage in 1782, is in the entry for 31st August 1763.

73. *Miscellanea*, p. 123.

74. For example, by D. M. Low in *Edward Gibbon, 1737-1794*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

would appear to reflect Gibbon's abiding admiration at the time of his first stay in Lausanne for Montesquieu.⁷⁵ In the first paragraph, Gibbon describes Sweden as 'tranquille a l'abri des loix'. That is how he cannot describe the Pays de Vaud: 'Que vous manque til? la liberté: et privés d'elle, tout vous manque.'⁷⁶ The precision of such telling rhetoric confirms the influence of Montesquieu. Later Gibbon was to regard the eloquence of Montesquieu as responsible for the 'sententious and oracular brevity'⁷⁷ attempted in his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, but here it is heard to better effect.

The content, too, of *The Letter on the Government of Berne* reflects the political philosophy of Montesquieu, as Baridon has remarked in his *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*:

Toute l'inspiration de la *Lettre* vient de Montesquieu: séparation des pouvoirs, origine "gothique" de la liberté, condamnation expresse du despotisme, apologie du commerce et de l'industrie, autant de thèmes courants dans l'*Esprit des Lois*.⁷⁸

The reason why the people of the Pays de Vaud lack liberty is that they are not subject to laws which have the common good of society as their object. There should be a council, such as existed under the Dukes of Savoy before the Reformation and the Bernese invasion, composed of the nobility, the clergy and the deputies of the principal towns; it assembled annually at

75. As Jeremy Black has written in *Eighteenth Century Europe 1700-1789*, London, 1990, p. 390, Montesquieu 'praised the constitutions of states whose virtues were often more apparent to foreigners than to their own citizens. *L'Esprit des Lois* acclaimed Scandinavia as the home of European liberties'.

76. *Miscellanea*, p.124.

77. *Memoirs*, p. 103, where Gibbon quotes Horace, *Ars poetica*, ll. 25-6: 'brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio'.

78. *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

Moudon,⁷⁹ and represented all interests in order to oppose any law harmful to those interests. The Great Council or Senate at Berne, which has replaced it, will always decide against local interests if they clash with its own. It not only legislates but also executes its own laws. 'Cette union de deux puissances qu'on ne devoit jamais reunir, les rend chacune plus formidables.'⁸⁰ Moreover the Great Council of Berne, as Gibbon has already described it in his *Journal de mon voyage*, has become an oligarchy of the leading families. Conspicuously absent are those courts of law found in monarchies where -

Toutes les volontés du prince, qui doivent être obeies le sont plus facilement, quand les sujets voyent combien elles sont raisonnables, puisqu'elles ont passé par l'examen de ces magistrats, qu'on ne peut ni tromper, ni seduire, ni intimider.⁸¹

Such guardians of popular rights create a sense of liberty and love of country and Gibbon sees that basis of liberty in the feudal states that Charlemagne established, building on the foundations laid by the Barbarians in the fifth century.⁸²

In contrast with that sense of Gothic liberty elsewhere in Europe, the people of the Pays de Vaud are dependent not on their constitution but on a foreign power for their relative prosperity. They have not enjoyed so much progress as other European countries since the conquest of Berne. The arts languish and commerce and manufactures are not encouraged. Nor has the

79. On the last day of his tour of Switzerland, Gibbon had passed through Moudon. He noted in his *Journal de mon voyage*: 'Du tems des Ducs de Savoye, le Grand Baillif du Pais de Vaud y residoit. Tous les Gentilshommes y avoient des maisons dont on voit encore les ruines.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 67.)

80. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 129. In Chapter XXXVIII of *The Decline and Fall* Gibbon was to describe how Charlemagne 'himself, the legislator of his age and country,' had studied the Salic and the Ripuarian laws of the Franks. (Vol. IV, pp. 131-2.)

Academy of Lausanne flourished:

fondée par des vues de devotion dans la chaleur d'une reformation, negligée depuis, et toujours Academie quoiqu'un digne Magistrat de cette ville proposât le projet salutaire de l'eriger en Université.⁸³

The Bernois had also discouraged the Huguenot refugees for reasons of state from staying in the Pays de Vaud after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, preferring to rule over a docile rather than an enterprising people; and here, Gibbon sees a parallel in Voltaire's tragedy, *Brutus*, written in the late 1720's, quoting four lines from Act III, Scene I of the play.⁸⁴

Moreover, although the theological regimen in the Pays de Vaud was less strict than the legacy of Calvin in Geneva, Gibbon is concerned that members of the Academy and the clergy in Lausanne and the surrounding countryside have been persecuted with allegations of Arminianism and Socinianism.⁸⁵

Gibbon goes on in *The Letter* to consider the shortcomings of the Bernese executive power. The chief public appointments are not used to reward the talent of subjects but are confined to the ruling oligarchy of Berne. Foreign service remains the career open to the "Gentilshommes" of

⁸³*Miscellanea*, p.132. The 'digne Magistrat' was Loys de Bochat, professor of law at the Academy, 1717-41, and Lieutenant-Bailiff of Lausanne from 1741 until his death in 1754. He had married an aunt of Deyverdun and lived in the house called La Grotte which Gibbon was to live in from 1783.

⁸⁴ Bonnard identified the source of the quotation, as acknowledged by Junod. (*Miscellanea*, p.133.) The quotation is very apt but has some inaccuracies, indicating that Gibbon may have relied on his memory:

Qu'il vaut mieux, qu'un roi sur le trone affermi
Commande a des sujets, malheureux mais soumis
Que d'avoir à dompter au sein de l'abondance
D'un peuple trop heureux l'indocile arrogance.

The first two lines written by Voltaire read:

Mais il vaut mieux qu'un roi, sur le trône remis,
Commande à des sujets, malheureux et soumis,

⁸⁵ This is a reference to the ecclesiastical consensus when investigators came from Berne in 1722 and administered oaths of conformity on the clergy. Gibbon tersely describes the situation: 'il fallut y envoyer des formulaires et des inquisiteurs destinés à faire autant d'Hypocrites qu'ils pourroient, non à la verite par le fer et le feu, mais par les Menaces et les privations d'Emploi.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 134.)

the Pays de Vaud, but even in that field opportunities are restricted by the preference given to citizens of Berne in the negotiations with foreign powers.⁸⁶ The Bailiffs preside over justice, the militia, finances and religion. Much of the revenue raised by taxes goes into the foreign reserves of Berne which has become rich by spending much less than it receives.⁸⁷

Such in outline are the reasons for Gibbon's remonstrance against the rule of Berne. It would appear that his purpose is to make the Lausannois aware of their position with the belief of a philosophe that enlightenment will bring understanding, reasoning and reform. Gibbon remarks that the reader knows him too well to believe that he would advocate a process of grumbling, sedition, anarchy, and then perhaps despotism.⁸⁸ *The Letter* at this point ends suddenly but Gibbon has probably written all that he intended.

Let us now consider further the date of its composition. Junod, as we have seen, follows Swiss practice and in the latest edition of *The Letter* attributes it to the period of Gibbon's 1763/4 stay in Lausanne.⁸⁹ As Chapter 5 will show, that was a time when Gibbon was preparing himself for his visit to Italy, and was detained longer than he had at first intended by social engagements and his researches. There is much detail in his *Journal* about his reading and writings for the period from 17th August 1763 to the date

86. *Miscellanea*, pp. 136-7.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-21, where he cites A. Verdeil's *Histoire du Canton de Vaud*, 1852, in support of his argument.

of his departure on the following 18th April⁹⁰ without any mention of *The Letter*. Junod argues that was to be expected because the *Journal* rarely refers to letters that he writes at that time.⁹¹ *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, however, was of course no ordinary letter but a political tract with literary pretensions. Gibbon was more likely to mention a composition of that nature in the privacy of his *Journal*. For the period that Gibbon was in Lausanne and writing his *Journal*, from 17th August 1763 to 18th April 1764, he gave detailed accounts of his writings other than his private letters; in contrast, his *Journal* for 1753-8 is brief,⁹² amounting to only five pages in Low's edition, and was composed several years afterwards in 1761. It is therefore less likely that he would have mentioned *The Letter* there, had he written it during his first stay in Lausanne.

One of the reasons given by Junod⁹³ for dating *The Letter on the Government of Berne* in 1763/4 is based on a misinterpretation of Gibbon's *Journal*. He was struck by the way Gibbon was reminded of the current condition of the Vaudois, when writing in his *Journal* for 1st November 1763 about the history of Italy, in the second century BC between the second Punic War and the war of the Italian allies known as the Social War. Gibbon wrote:

On refusoit la bourgeoisie Romaine aux Cités, mais dès qu'un particulier faisoit paroître une ambition justifiée par les talens. La Republique connoissoit trop bien ses interets pour ne pas la lui accorder. J'écris dans le pays de Vaud. Ses habitans doivent etre

90. Gibbon had arrived at Lausanne on 25th May 1763 and, distracted it would seem by his social engagements, it was not until the end of July that he resumed an account of his stay in Paris during the preceding period of January to May, and not until the 17th August that he began his Lausanne Journal.

91. *Miscellanea*, p. 120.

92. *Journal A*, pp. 3-8.

93. *Miscellanea*, pp. 118-120.

However, as shown above,⁹⁵ the comparison had previously been made by Gibbon when he was writing about the constitution of Berne in his *Journal de mon voyage* in 1755. There also he had made specific reference to the Social War, but there the criticism of Berne in the phrase already quoted - 'c'est que la Cupidité particuliere éteint les lumieres de la raison' - was unmistakable and conveys no sense of the resignation in the remark: 'Ses habitans doivent etre contens de leur etat.' In 1755 he had first read Vertot's *Histoire des révolutions de la république romaine*,⁹⁶ and it was this book in 1763, in conjunction with Cluvier's *Italia Antiqua*,⁹⁷ which again caused Gibbon to reflect on the nature of the Social War.

It is not surprising therefore that Gibbon should have been reminded again of the parallel with the Pays de Vaud, but his attitude to Berne had become much more tolerant by 1763. By then he also feels that Vertot may have distorted the situation a little in the second century BC.⁹⁸ He regards the nations of Italy, during the one hundred and twenty years between the second Punic War and the Social War, to have enjoyed a period of prosperity and peace. There is no bitterness in his 1763 comparison with the condition of the Pays de Vaud under the rule of Berne. The allies in going to war with Rome were defeated and although they obtained the rights of

94. *Journal B*, p.127. Junod comments on the passage: 'la manière abrupte, et somme toute mal justifiée, dont il introduit sa mention du pays de Vaud est d'autant plus frappante. Il ne fait pas de doute que Gibbon ait été à ce moment en train de composer sa lettre sur le gouvernement de Berne...' (*Miscellanea*, p. 120.)

95. On pp. 30-31.

96. The book used by Gibbon together with Cicero's epistles for his double translation exercises into Latin and French, described in his *Memoirs*, pp. 74-75.

97. Published at Leyden in 1624; Gibbon made entries about it in his *Journal* on thirty-eight days from 13th October to 3rd December 1763.

98. 'Je vais hasarder quelques idées sur cette guerre Singuliere dont l'Abbé de Vertot a un peu defiguré les circonstances essentielles.' (*Journal B*, p.122.)

Roman citizens, they had exchanged their former tranquillity for a period of disasters, which their revolt had caused. That is why the people of the Vaud must be content with their status. The difference in outlook is reflected in Gibbon's entry in his *Journal* for the following day when he attended a private assembly at which the new Bailiff, representing the Government of Berne, was present. Gibbon remarks: 'Il est vraiment plaisant de voir l'empressement de tout le monde autour de leur petit Souverain.'⁹⁹

Other writers such as Baridon in *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, 1977,¹⁰⁰ and Craddock in *Young Edward Gibbon*, 1982,¹⁰¹ have followed Junod's findings of 1952 as to the probable date of *The Letter*, but Craddock refers to E. Badian's study on 'Gibbon on War' in *Gibbon et Rome à la Lumière de l'Historiographie Moderne*, 1977, for a different view. There, Badian argues that the passage in *Journal B* for 1st November 1763 does not support a date of composition of *The Letter* for that year, noting that 'the attitude to benevolent aristocratic despotism is precisely opposite to that in the *Lettre*,' but he has no positive evidence for another date, simply stating: 'This seems to leave his first visit to Lausanne as the only possible date.'¹⁰² Low, whilst aware in 1937 of contrary Swiss views, asserts without discussion: 'There can be little doubt that Sheffield was right in assigning this *Lettre* to Gibbon's first residence in Lausanne.'¹⁰³

Womersley, in *The Transformation of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1988,¹⁰⁴ when discussing Gibbon's changing estimation of

99. *Journal B*, p. 133.

100. *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

101. *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

102. Footnote 18 on p. 116 of P. Ducrey et al., *Gibbon et Rome à la Lumière de l'Historiographie Moderne*, Geneva, 1977.

103. *Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, p. 66, footnote 1.

104. p. 67.

republics, senses that *The Letter* is early and assumes it was written before his second stay in Lausanne.

With regard to the internal evidence of the argument of *The Letter*, for the dating of the manuscript, it can be shown to support the argument for the mid- to late-1750's, without being conclusive. A clue based on a contemporary happening may be read into the remark following the reference to Major Davel: 'Encore même il regne à Lausanne une Inquisition Sourde.'¹⁰⁵ This may be related to the mention, already cited on page 27 above, in Gibbon's letter to Breitinger of 24th March 1757 that delegates from Berne were reporting on the teaching of the Academy and Church in Lausanne.¹⁰⁶

More specific indications may be derived from references to how long the Bernese have presided in Lausanne. Gibbon identifies the commencement of Bernese sovereignty, as one would expect, in 1536, the year of the Reformation.¹⁰⁷ Junod suggests that Gibbon might have taken 1564, the year of the Treaty of Lausanne, when the Duke of Savoy formally relinquished his claim to the Vaud, as an alternative base year when he makes two references to two hundred years being the period of Bernese rule.¹⁰⁸ That would fit neatly with assigning the text to 1764. There is, however, a curiously specific reference to two hundred and twelve years when Gibbon discusses the failure of Bernese rule to develop the economy

105. *Miscellanea*, p. 135.

106. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 53. 'Legati Bernenses Cl. nempe Hallerus Senatorque cui nomen de Bonstetten Lausannae per viginti dies morati sunt, Academiae Ecclesiaeque statum summa diligentia perscrutantes, praelectionibus et disputationibus versati, singulos professores apud se arcessentes, codicillos ab omnibus accipientes etiam ab infimis. Nihil amplius. Omnia ad Senatum retulerunt ut ibi decernantur quae opportent.'

107. Gibbon, when referring to the Senate of Berne, states: 'Ils ont été maitres du pays de Vaud depuis l'an 1536.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 131.)

108. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

of the Pays de Vaud and asks

Que n'auroient-ils pas fait, ces grands hommes rarement tranquilles sur le trône, si pendant deux-cens douze ans, ils n'eussent eu que des voisins pacifiques et des peuples soumis?¹⁰⁹

The manuscript shows that Gibbon had first included the word 'plus' after 'pendant', so that he might have first been going to write 'plus de deux-cens ans,' rather than 'pendant deux-cens douze ans'. Neither of the consequent dates of 1748 or 1776 for the composition of *The Letter of the Government of Berne*, depending on the base year used, would be credible and one is left wondering if the change of wording was for the sake of euphony. A further clue as to the date of composition is provided when Gibbon discusses Abraham Stanyan's¹¹⁰ estimate of the foreign assets of Berne in his *An Account of Switzerland written in the year 1714*, and remarks that the estimate was made forty years ago.¹¹¹ This is the most specific indication but the discrepancies in the clues given create the impression that Gibbon might have wanted the date of composition to remain indefinite.¹¹²

Such indefiniteness might have been a conscious form of discretion. Caution as to date and authorship in the face of possible persecution would explain why *The Letter* was left unfinished and not published in his lifetime.

109. *Miscellanea*, p. 132.

110. Abraham Stanyan was British Ambassador to the Swiss Cantons from 1705 to 1713. He was known there as M. de Stanian and Gibbon refers to him in *The Letter* as 'Stanian Ambassadeur d'Angleterre à Berne'. Amongst his duties tell the negotiation of the transfer of Neuchâtel to the King of Prussia in 1709. (*Ibid.*, p. 139). The British interest had been to exclude the French candidate. In his *Journal de mon voyage*, Gibbon mentions as a commonly known fact that when the former sovereign of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Longueville, had died without an heir, the States of Neuchâtel had preferred the King of Prussia to his rivals because of his remoteness and his religion. (*Ibid.*, p. 14.)

111. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Craddock has a misleading argument in *Young Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, p. 89, about beginning this period of forty years from 1722, based on Lord Sheffield's reading of a date that has been obscured by an amendment by Gibbon, but Junod's reading of 1712 for the date of Stanyan's estimate seems right to me from a close scrutiny of the manuscript and 1722 is ruled out in any case by the date in the title of Stanyan's work.

112. Junod comes to the same conclusion in reviewing the dates: 'On le voit, ces données ne concordent pas entre elles; peut-être est-ce à dessein.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 118.)

The enthusiasm with which the published text was received by patriotic historians of the Vaud in the nineteenth century clearly indicates that it would have been regarded as subversive by the Bernese authorities if it had come to their attention in Gibbon's lifetime. During his first stay in Lausanne, Gibbon had many reasons to be discreet. After the traumas of his apostasy, his gambling debts¹¹³ and the news of his father's remarriage, Gibbon would not have wanted to undermine further his relationship with his father, or to compromise Pavillard, by incurring public accusations of political radicalism.

Turning to the evidence of his handwriting, it would not be possible to be certain about exact dating,¹¹⁴ were it not for the changes in Gibbon's use of accentuation. This is specific evidence which may have influenced Sheffield's belief that the handwriting is of the time of Gibbon's first residence in Lausanne, and in any case his view is difficult to ignore given his familiarity with Gibbon's manuscripts. Surprising, however, is the ignoring of the evidence of accentuation by the Swiss editor of *The Letter*. It is noted by de Beer, the editor with Bonnard of the *Journal de mon voyage*, that whereas in the *Journal* of 1763/4 Gibbon almost always puts

113. These had caused Gibbon to flee to Geneva in January 1755 with a view to raising money in London, but Pavillard followed him and persuaded him to return to Lausanne. The fullest account by Gibbon of this escapade is in a letter to his maternal aunt, Catherine Porten. (*Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 3-5.) An autobiographical reflection on this episode in his life may be detected in a footnote to his description of the German tribes in Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall* where he comments that 'the Germans might borrow the arts of play from the Romans, but the passion is wonderfully inherent in the human species.' (Vol. I, p. 239.)

114. Junod (*Miscellanea*, p. 117) is unconvincing when he invites comparison of the way in which the phrase 'dans le pays de Vaud' is written by Gibbon in the manuscripts of *The Letter* and of the 1763/4 *Journal B*. Junod also cites a manuscript of a double index entitled 'Authors' and 'Places' (Add. Mss. 34,882) as being very close to the handwriting in *The Letter*. He remarks that it is not dated but must be of the period of Gibbon's second stay in Lausanne of 1763/4 because it refers to works mentioned by Gibbon in *Journal B*. This analogy and dating are completely undermined when it is realised that the two indices in question form part of a compilation of authorities cited and places mentioned in the completed *History of The Decline and Fall* and appears therefore to date from much later, possibly the late 1780's. Junod is on safer ground when he examines the paper used for *Journal B* and finds that it is different from that used for *The Letter*.

two grave accents on the feminine endings of adjectives and nouns (e.g. aisèè, annèès), in the 1755 *Journal* he often uses two acute accents (e.g. situéeè, annééés).¹¹⁵ De Beer also notices that sometimes the manuscript of the 1755 *Journal* indicates, by a different form or stroke of the pen or even a different shade or colour of ink, that Gibbon may have gone over the text again putting in the second acute accent. That, however, is not always the case and there is an instance of an example (annéés) being crossed out at the time of writing with the two acute accents already inserted. Clearly Gibbon's practice is inconsistent as there are several examples which are correct (e.g. donnée), or otherwise wrong (e.g. annee)! It is evident, however, that Gibbon's confused use of accents during his first stay in Lausanne is different from his use of accents during his second stay in 1763/4 and that his use of accents in *The Letter on the Government of Berne* conforms with that of the first period. Thus, in *The Letter*, there can be found nineteen examples of adjectives and nouns with two acute accents (e.g. réglées, entréée) and eight which are correct (e.g. sacrifiée, idées).

Gibbon's curious use of the acute accent can be traced in his letters in French as late as a letter to Suzanne Curchod, dated 23rd February 1759.¹¹⁶ When he resumes his *Journal* in French to record his visit to Paris from January to May 1763, the use of the grave accent predominates to the extent that he no longer uses the acute accent. To illustrate this, Gibbon begins his introduction to the *Paris Journal*:

Après avoir quitté l'Angleterre, il est assez naturel que j'en quitte la langue. Les idées ont produit les mots; et j'aurois souvent autant de peine à rendre au Anglois des usages du Continent, que j'aurois eu de difficulté à bien exprimer en François les mœurs Angloises et les

¹¹⁵. *Miscellanea*, p. 9.

¹¹⁶. *Letters* Vol. I, No. 34, pp. 119-122. Later examples can be seen in his manuscript addition to *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* of 28th April 1761 in Add. Mss.34,880.

The evidence of the accentuation in the manuscript of *The Letter* on the Government of Berne therefore establishes it as a work of Gibbon's first stay in Lausanne or shortly after, as Lord Sheffield originally thought. This dating accords with Gibbon's interest in Swiss political life and the liberal nature of his views revealed already in the 1755 *Journal de mon voyage*. It is more likely to have been drafted when Gibbon was still in Lausanne, in view of the vivacity and immediacy of its style and address to a close confidant, who is a Vaudois. It is possible to imagine the presence of Georges Deyverdun, who was Gibbon's constant companion in his studies during the final period¹¹⁸ of his first stay in Lausanne, but who was abroad during his second stay of 1763/4. The underlying argument of this chapter, however, is that *The Letter* can be regarded as a natural development from the experience gained on his 1755 tour. The importance of *The Letter*, as the work of a young man on the threshold of his career as a political observer, lies in the unreserved faith which it expresses in the value of liberty and constitutional government in which all interests are represented.

In this respect, it was clearly an inspiration to Vaudois patriotism

117. The *Journal* of Gibbon's stay in Paris from 28th January to 9th May 1763 is edited by G. A. Bonnard and printed in *Miscellanea*, pp. 93-107. In Add. Mss. 34,876, it consists of 21 pages in Gibbon's handwriting. As explained by Bonnard in his Préface (*Miscellanea*, pp 87-92), Gibbon wrote his introduction to the *Journal* in Lausanne at the end of July 1763. An earlier example of his use of the grave accent is his entry for the 21st February written at the time of his stay in Paris: 'Aujourd'hui j'ai commencé ma tournée pour voir les endroits dignes d'attention dans la ville.' (*Ibid.*, p. 94.)

118. In his *Memoirs* (p.76), Gibbon describes how in this period of twenty-seven months from January 1756 to April 1758 he adopted an extensive plan of reading and studying the Latin Classics: 'Mr. Deyverdun my friend...had joined with equal zeal, though not with equal perseverance in the same undertaking. To him every thought, every composition was instantly communicated; with him I enjoyed the benefits of a free conversation on the topics of our common studies.'

when it was first published at the end of the eighteenth century. Henri Monod, who described himself as 'Ancien Conseiller d'État, et Membre à vie du Grand Conseil du Canton de Vaud' on the title page of his *Mémoires* published in 1805,¹¹⁹ credited Gibbon on the evidence of *The Letter* with having acquired a profound knowledge of the state and of the government of the Vaud. His book contains thirteen pages of extracts 'de cette lettre remarquable' and, in publishing these, Monod shows how close his own view of the history of the Vaud during its subjection to Berne is to Gibbon's interpretation. He regards the historian as 'un zélé Tory', yet, so critical have his contemporaries become of radical ideas, he believes that anyone who does not know Gibbon and the time in which he wrote would accuse the author of *The Letter* 'd'avoir broyé ses couleurs dans quelques clubs Jacobins aux tems les plus orageux de la révolution...' ¹²⁰ It is a glowing tribute by a revolutionary patriot to the early liberalism of Gibbon which his experience of Switzerland had inspired in him.

¹¹⁹. Henri Monod, *Mémoires*, published in two volumes in Paris, 1805.

¹²⁰. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p.59.

3 THE LIBERTY OF OF THE SWISS

*There is one [subject] I should prefer to all others...*¹²¹

When Gibbon travelled through the northern cantons of Switzerland with the Pavillards in 1755, he visited and recorded some of the most eventful scenes of the early history of the Swiss nation. The confederation of cantons was established by treaty and conquest between 1291 and 1499. Gibbon celebrated the heroism of their struggle for independence from the major powers around them, comparing their actions with the exploits of the Romans under the Republic. So many examples of public spirit and military glory and so many lessons of government could be drawn from this period. It was a subject which continued to stimulate his imagination and after his return to England he wrote of it in terms of an extensive theme which he would prefer to write about above all others:

*The History of the Liberty of the Swiss, which that brave people recovered from the house of Austria, defended against the Dauphin afterwards Lewis XI, and at last sealed with the blood of Charles.*¹²²

The first major confrontation of the Swiss forest cantons of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden with the House of Hapsburg was over a frontier and

121. *Journal A*, p.103.

122. *Ibid.*, where the entry is for 26th July 1762. Gibbon was later to transcribe the passage in his *Memoirs* to read: 'There is one (subject) I should prefer to all others, it is *The history of the liberty of the Swiss*, of that independence which a brave people rescued from the house of Austria, defended against a Dauphin of France, and finally sealed with the blood of Charles of Burgundy.' (p. 122.)

involved, significantly for Gibbon, the lands of the Abbey of Einsiedeln. A raid on Einsiedeln by the Schwyzois caused a punitive reaction from Duke Leopold of Austria, resulting in the Battle of Morgarten in 1315. The forest cantons emerged from the battle as a victorious new power which within a century deprived the Hapsburgs of their lands between the Rhine and the Alps.¹²³ A growing number of cantons, including Zurich and Berne, joined the Confederation and in the fifteenth century it became the major military power in Europe. Compulsory military service in the cantons to meet emergencies when they arose provided them with an unrivalled infantry force;¹²⁴ thenceforward the relatively overpopulated cantons, always concerned about their food supplies and means of support, found they could earn foreign revenue through emigration in the form of military service abroad.¹²⁵

123. Gibbon thinks of this early period of Swiss history in his essay entitled *Digression on the character of Brutus* where he refers to the three peasants of Switzerland, the leaders of the three cantons, 'who in the year 1308 delivered their country from the Austrian yoke.' (p. 96, Vol. IV of *Misc. Works*.) The quotation is in a footnote to the main text which reads: 'The few patriots who, by a bold and well-concerted enterprise, have delivered their country from foreign or domestic slavery, Timoleon, and the elder Brutus, Andrew Doria, and Gustavus Vasa, the three peasants of Switzerland, and the four princes of Orange, excite the warmest sensations of esteem and gratitude in those breasts which feel for the interests of mankind.' The date of this essay is uncertain, but Craddock has shown in *The English Essays of Edward Gibbon*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 559-60, that it probably was written in 1765-7, when Gibbon was engaged in writing his *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses*. 'The three peasants' were Walther Furts of Uri, Werner de Stauffach of Schwyz and Arnold du Melchtal of Unterwalden, who met in secret at Grütli to plan the liberation of their country from Austria.

124. Recalling in his *Memoirs* the establishment of Britain's militia during the Seven Years War, Gibbon regretted that it had not followed the Swiss example in failing to recruit compulsorily all who were of suitable age, able-bodied and not exempt on grounds of public service. Instead recruitment was by lot for a period of three years to be followed by replacements drawn by lot for a further period of three years. All recruits also had the option of finding a substitute or of buying exemption for ten pounds. The superior discipline of the Swiss system arose from 'the numerous intermixture of Officers and soldiers whose youth has been trained in foreign service; and the annual exercise of a few days is the sole tax which is imposed on a martial people consisting for the most part of shepherds and husbandmen.' (*Memoirs*, pp. 108-9.)

125. This was still a feature of the Vaud economy when Gibbon resided in Lausanne and was an issue raised in his *Letter on the Government of Berne*. Under the terms of a treaty of 1712, twenty-four companies were raised for the service of the Dutch in the canton of Berne including the dependent Pays de Vaud, and Gibbon complained that an unfair quota of the higher ranks was reserved for the citizens of Berne. When he wrote of the practice in general terms in his *Journal* for the 28th September 1763 his attitude had changed to one of sorrow that it was still part of the Swiss way of life: 'Quand la raison seroit convaincue le Cœur s'eleveroit toujours contre cet usage barbare des Suisses mais il s'en faut beaucoup que la raison soit convaincûe.' (p. 64 of *Journal B*.)

Economic and military considerations led to further Swiss conquests in the fifteenth century; this was in spite of internal discord arising from struggles to defend popular rights, from the opposition of town and country interests and from the independent tendencies of the cantons within the Confederation. It was the struggle for freedom from the influence of threatening foreign powers, such as the French, the Burgundians and the German Empire, which kept the Confederation together, as at the battle of Saint Jacques sur la Birse in 1444 when the Dauphin Louis achieved a costly victory but failed to take control of Basle and then withdrew behind the Jura.

The conflict of the Swiss with Charles the Bold of Burgundy arose from the aim of Burgundy to consolidate its territories at the expense of the Duke of Savoy, whose possession of the Pays de Vaud was already a cause of contention with the canton of Berne. Charles was defeated by the Swiss at Grandson on Lake Neuchâtel and at Morat near the frontiers of Berne in 1476, and finally at Nancy, when the Swiss were allies of Lorraine, in 1477. In the next war of 1499 against the Emperor Maximilian I, who had asserted his influence over the cantons by claiming the right to tax them, the Swiss were again successful and the peace treaty of Basle of that year confirmed Switzerland's independence from the Empire and secured the acquisition of Basle and Schaffhausen.

These were the events in the early history of Switzerland which appealed to Gibbon. Before the century of the Reformation, the Swiss were full of the spirit of resistance to foreign exploitation. However, the

preaching of reform in the Church led to the collapse of national unity and the decline of Switzerland as a European power, even though the Confederation¹²⁶ survived and continued to increase its territories. The Reformation was used by Berne to win the Pays de Vaud from the Catholic House of Savoy in 1536 but, from Gibbon's viewpoint in Lausanne, such dependency on Berne lasting over two hundred years formed no part of the heroic period in Swiss history when the liberty of the Swiss was asserted and defended. Rather, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, he looked back with nostalgia to the period before 1536 when representatives of the nobility, clergy and towns of the Pays de Vaud used to meet at Moudon. They acted as 'le Conseil perpetuel du prince'¹²⁷ in the time of the Dukes of Savoy. In contrast, the Grand Council of Berne in Gibbon's time contained within itself legislative and executive powers and served only the interests of the oligarchy of some eighty families resident in the city of Berne. Lacking a constitution which would have allowed its Vaudois subjects to examine the laws and express themselves freely, Berne had in effect prevented the growth of civic virtues in the land which it controlled.

An example of the continuing oppression of the policy of Berne was the imprisonment of Micheli du Crest, a radical of Genevan origin, and outspoken critic of self-interested oligarchies.¹²⁸ Gibbon was aware of his

126. Gibbon describes the nature of the Confederation neatly in the *Journal de mon voyage* as follows: 'Tout le monde sait que la Suisse est un corps composé de treize parties, toutes souveraines et independantes, et qui ne sont unies que pour se mieux conserver...' Already he is thinking of describing, in another place with much greater detail, the nature of the six democratic cantons, which clearly have more interest for him than the other seven, where 'le pays est le patrimoine de la ville principale.' (*Miscellanea*, p. 16.)

127. *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, p. 129 of *Miscellanea*.

128. Micheli's criticism of the oligarchy of Geneva was not unlike Gibbon's criticism of Berne in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, when he wrote of the form that a democratic state should take as one 'in which the people itself exercises the acts of sovereignty, without however exercising subordinate government, but remits this government to chiefs or officers who are accountable to it and whose administration it has the right to examine.' (quoted on p. 143 of Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, *op. cit.*)

existence in the château of Aarburg when he passed through the town on 13th October 1755.¹²⁹ He knew the history of his political activities and regarded him as a 'grand partisan de le Democratie.'¹³⁰ Gibbon reported that the Bernois had at first treated him lightly, but after being accused of taking part in political agitation in 1747, he had been held in custody at Aarburg, where he was to die at the age of seventy-six in 1766. Gibbon shows much interest in him, remarking that the château was used to hold prisoners of state but that Micheli du Crest was the only one in 1755. He goes on to report that he was treated well, having permission to eat at the Commandant's table but he would not accept the offer. Gibbon comments that he was also a mathematician and he passed his confinement in calculating the height of mountains visible from the château.¹³¹

At the age of eighteen on his journey with the Pavillards, Gibbon penetrated for the first and only time in his life into the forests of Schwyz, for ever associated with the origin of the Swiss nation and with the democracy of its founding. In his *Journal de mon voyage*, after criticising the extravagance and superstition inspired by the abbey of Einsiedeln, he describes the completely democratic nature of the canton in which it was founded.

Ils ont a la verité des Conseils, pour les Affaires ordinaires, mais pour tout ce qui est un peu de Consequence, c'est l'Assemblée Generale du Pays qui en decide. Cette Assemblée est composée de tous les hommes du canton de l'age de dix-sept ans et au-dessus. Chaque homme n'a que sa voix; le premier et le dernier, le maitre et son valet sont tous au meme niveau.¹³²

129. Gibbon does not confirm in the *Journal de mon voyage* that he saw him, as de Beer assumes (p. 7 of *Miscellanea*). There is no account of his personal appearance, which makes it doubtful whether Gibbon was allowed to meet him.

130. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

131. Gibbon refers to his published findings on this subject, which de Beer has identified as printed in Augsbourg in 1755. (*Ibid.*, p. 48.)

132. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

He illustrates this equality with the story of a cobbler who interrupted the the speech of the first magistrate of the canton with the words: 'Tais-toi, tu as parlé assez long-tems, laisse moi parler a mon tour.' The magistrate had to show respect and to ask permission to add a few words to what he had already said.¹³³ Gibbon then lists Uri, Unterwalden, Glarus, Zug and Appenzell as the five other democratic cantons where the peasantry is free and independent.

If these democratic cantons represented for Gibbon the valour of the original Swiss nation, Charles the Bold of Burgundy personified the danger from foreign invasion. When Gibbon arrived during the first day of his 1755 tour at Grandson in a narrow pass between the Jura and Lake Neuchâtel, he was well aware of the importance of the place in Swiss history. He writes of the defeat of Charles the Bold ("le Hardi") in 1476: 'Cette fameuse journée ne fait pas moins d'honneur aux Annales des Suisses que celles de Marathon, de Salamine, de Platée, de Mycale aux Grecs.'¹³⁴ He supports this view of the battle persuasively, asserting that it changed the face of Europe, ruined the prospects of the most powerful warrior of his age, and consequently was the cause of the future strength of the House of Austria.

There is a note of regret in Gibbon's *Journal* that he did not visit the battlefield; everyone had told him that there was only a small elevation of land to be seen which had acted as a retrenchment for the camp of the Duke of Burgundy, but he was able to observe in passing the Château of Grandson

133. Such liberty, Gibbon regards as 'la licence effrenée' but he goes on to observe, with worldly wisdom: 'Mais malgré cela un habile homme qui sait comment on peut manier l'Esprit d'une multitude, fait souvent faire a celle ci tout ce qu'il veut.' (*Miscellanea*, p.33.)

134 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

the marks of cannonballs on its walls. Four days later at Soleurre he records that the armour of Charles the Bold is in the arsenal. 'Son Epee est longue et ondée, et ses cuissards (les seuls que j'ai vu de la sorte) sont sans ecailles.'¹³⁵ He is also intrigued by body armour 'd'une forme singuliere', which the guide confirmed was formerly worn by Swiss women when they accompanied their husbands in battle.¹³⁶ Gibbon may have remembered this evidence of female warriors when writing of the valour of the women of the German tribes in Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.¹³⁷

He noted relics of the disastrous campaign of Charles the Bold elsewhere in Switzerland. The tapestries which once hung in the Duke's tent were in the library at Berne.¹³⁸ At Zurich, he remarked that there were the arms of Charles 'comme partout ailleurs'.¹³⁹ Returning to Lausanne on the penultimate day of the tour, he passed through Morat where he again noticed the language frontier, jokingly referring to how French and German are spoken equally, 'c'est a dire toutes les deux très mal'; but the place is immortalised for Gibbon for the second defeat of Charles in 1476. 'Car a Grandson il perdit ses tresors, a Morat ses troupes, et a Nancy sa vie.'¹⁴⁰ Such effective brevity, using a rhetorical device characteristic of the mature historian of *The Decline and Fall*, shows how moved he was by Swiss

135. *Miscellanea*, p. 18

136. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-8. I have looked in vain for such armour on a recent visit to the Arsenal Museum, built between 1609 and 1614.

137. 'In their great invasions, the camps of the barbarians were filled with a multitude of women, who remained firm and undaunted amidst the sounds of arms, the various forms of destruction, and the honourable wounds of their sons and husbands.' (Vol. I, p. 246.) A few pages earlier (p. 240), Gibbon showed that he had Switzerland in mind when, speculating on the population of ancient Germany, he referred to Caesar's estimate of the population of the Helvetian nation.

138. *Miscellanea*, p. 61.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

history. With the devotion of a patriot, he records the inscription in a chapel where bones from the battlefield are preserved:

Deo Opt: Max: Caroli inclyti ac fortissimi Ducis Burgundiae
Exercitus, Muratum obsidens ab Helvetiis Caesus hoc sui
monumentum Reliquit. Anno MCCCCLXXVI.

Surely Gibbon would have had Charles in mind when he returned to England via Nancy in April 1758. Though it was wartime, he travelled 'slowly but pleasantly in a hired coach over the hills of Franche-comté and the fertile province of Lorraine' under the assumed name of his friend Deyverdun and in the company of two Swiss officers in the Dutch service. It was not the final defeat of Charles, however, but the magnificent town-planning of Stanislaus, the exiled King of Poland, which he recalled later in his *Journal* and the *Memoirs*.¹⁴¹

Gibbon scholars have been impressed by the visual sense of his writing. Womersley in *The Transformation of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,¹⁴² quotes from Chapter LXIV of *The Decline and Fall*: 'Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect; a column in a scene of ruins...';¹⁴³ Carnochan in *Gibbon's Solitude*,¹⁴⁴ notes the same clarity, comparing it with a 'cinematic technique, in Chapter XI: 'Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean.'¹⁴⁵ This visual effect is evident in descriptions of scenes which he had not visited, as in his description in Chapter XL of *The Decline and Fall* of the buildings and fortifications of Constantinople in the

141. *Journal A*, pp. 7-8, written in 1761; *Memoirs*, p. 87.

142. *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

143. Vol. VII, p. 28.

144. W. B. Carnochan, *Gibbon's Solitude, The Inward World of the Historian*, Stanford, 1987, p. 59.

145. Vol. I, p. 329.

time of Justinian.¹⁴⁶ Occasionally, however, the use of his own experience is apparent. Memories of his tour of 1755 found expression in a footnote to his account of the victory of Clovis over the Alemanni in Chapter XXXVIII.¹⁴⁷ Having located the province of the Alemanni in 'the northern parts of Helvetia', Gibbon relates that vestiges of Roman rule before the Alemanni's subjection of the land 'may still be discovered in the fertile and populous valley of the Aar.' He then confirms that he is remembering his travels with the Pavillards by remarking in the footnote:

Within the ancient walls of Vindonissa, the castle of Hapsburg, the abbey of Königsfeld, and the town of Bruck (Brugg), have successively arisen. The philosophic traveller may compare the monuments of Roman conquest, of feudal or Austrian tyranny, of monkish superstition, and of industrious freedom. If he be truly a philosopher he will applaud the merit and happiness of his own times.

Some twenty-five years before writing this footnote Gibbon had performed the role of philosophic traveller, as revealed in his *Journal de mon voyage*,¹⁴⁸ already conscious of the elements of Roman origins, Hapsburg tyranny, religious devotion and industry in the making of Switzerland.

Among Gibbon's sources for his narrative of the conquests of Clovis in Chapter XXXVIII is de Watteville's *Histoire de la Confédération Helvétique*, first published in Berne in 1754. In footnote 24 to that chapter he praises the Swiss historian for accurately defining the 'Helvetian limits of

146. Gibbon's attention to detail in such descriptions is attested by his use of exact measurements, as in his account of the dome of St. Sophia on p. 262 of Volume IV, and also by his remarkable dismissal of human vanity: 'Yet how dull is the artifice, how insignificant is the labour, if it be compared with the formation of the vilest insect that crawls upon the surface of the temple' (p. 264.)

147. No. 25 on pp. 112-3 of Vol. IV of *Decline and Fall*.

148. In his *Journal de mon voyage* for 28th September 1755, Gibbon noted that the Emperor Albert had lost his life at Königsfeld through the treachery of his nephew Jean, Duke of Swabia, in 1308, and that his widow had founded the magnificent abbey in his memory. Gibbon saw an inscription without a monument and learnt from the Avoyer Tillier later that day, on arriving at Baden, that the Austrians had some years earlier negotiated the transfer of the Emperor's body to their own country but had not made use of the permission. (*Miscellanea*, p. 21.) Gibbon had reason to remember therefore the Austrian presence in the Aar valley when later narrating the conquests of Clovis.

the duchy of Alemannia' and the Transjurane Burgundy.'¹⁴⁹ Memories of the area inform his next remark that the limits or boundaries were -

commensurate with the diocese of Constance and Avenche, or Lausanne, and are still discriminated, in Modern Switzerland, by the use of the German or French language.

It is interesting to note that Gibbon had first made use of de Watteville's book at the time of his 1755 tour. Craddock has noted that he may have actually purchased it while he was in Berne in October 1755.¹⁵⁰ Gibbon cites de Watteville on page 134 of his "Common Place Book",¹⁵¹ where he again discusses the historical mistakes in the inscription on the column which he had seen on 15th October 1755, on the site of a battlefield, near the village of Fraubrunnen in the canton of Berne.¹⁵² The corrections are Gibbon's own¹⁵³ but in the "Common Place Book" he infers that they are based on reading de Watteville - 'si l'on s'en rapporte a M. de Watteville', supporting the view that Gibbon did have the book with him in Berne as he wrote the *Journal de mon voyage*, and that he subsequently took further note of it in his "Common Place Book". The second edition of the book was in his Bentinck Street library in the 1770's and remained in his library at

149. *Decline and Fall*, p. 112 of Vol. IV.

150. p. 306 of *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.* The title page of the first edition of 1754 says that it was sold 'à BERNE Chez Gottschall & Compagnie'. There is a copy of the first edition in the University Library of Geneva.

151. See footnote 49 above. Craddock corrects de Beer in his "Commentaire" on the *Journal de mon voyage* (*Miscellanea*, p. 83) in demonstrating from the way that the "Common Place Book" was compiled that, although it was begun on 19th March 1755, the entry from de Watteville's book was written after the tour of Switzerland. (Appendix to *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-7.)

152. The inscription, already referred to in Chapter 1, concerns the invasion of the canton of Berne in 1375 by Enguerrand de Coucy, husband of Isabella, daughter of King Edward III of England, who was intent on recovering his rights under the marriage contract of his mother, a daughter of Duke Leopold of Austria. He took advantage of the truce between England and France of 1375 to gather a force of more than 40,000, including French, Flemish, English and Welsh mercenaries, and was repelled by Swiss confederates in league with the House of Austria. The inscription was wrong, as Gibbon noted, in describing Enguerrand as "Dux Anglus", being a member of a powerful family from Picardy, and in suggesting that his wife, instead of his mother, was Austrian.

153. De Watteville quotes the inscription which Gibbon copies, either from him or from the monument itself, but the Swiss author does not draw attention to the mistakes in it which Gibbon could deduce from the previous narrative (pp. 133-8 of *Histoire de la Confédération Helvétique* in the third edition of 1768 in the British Library).

De Watteville was a name which came to Gibbon's mind when he wrote of the oligarchy of Berne's bourgeois families in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, referring to the Great Council or Senate as a place where 'Les de Watteviles et les Steiguers y remplissent une trentaine de places.'¹⁵⁵ Alexandre-Louis de Watteville, the author of *Histoire de la Confédération Helvétique*, is described on the title page of the first edition as 'du Conseil Souverain de la République de BERNE & Baillif de la Comté de Nydau' and on the title page of the third edition as 'Haut Commandant du Munsterthal, Juge des Appellations dans les Chambre Suprême du Pays-de-Vaud, & ancien Baillif de la Ville & Comté de Nydau'. Such a worthy statesman, proud of his family and his national culture, would regard a history of the Swiss nation as a useful product of his leisure. The introduction of his work adopts the style and purpose of an enlightened historian with the comments:

Nos Chroniques ont ramassé bien des fables sur l'origine de la Nation Helvétique entière, et de ces trois Cantons en particulier. Nôtre siècle éclairé, qui n'admet aucun système destitué de preuves solides, a rejeté toutes ces traditions.

One can imagine the interest that such promise of solid proofs of early Swiss

154. The Catalogue in *Keynes* includes de Watteville's book in the 1757 Berne second edition from the Bentinck Street manuscript list, containing nothing later than 1777; it was at Lausanne when Gibbon died and was sold to William Beckford by Lord Sheffield as Gibbon's executor; later it was offered for sale at Lausanne in 1832 and 1833. It would appear that Gibbon replaced the first with the second edition without ever acquiring the third edition ('Considérablement augmentée'), printed at Yverdon in 1768.

155. *Miscellanea*, pp. 127-8. The closeness of these families is shown by the dedication of de Watteville's book to 'son Excellence Monseigneur CHRISTOPHLE STEIGUER Seigneur Advoyer Règnant de la République de BERNE'. Gibbon himself was associated with the de Watteville family throughout his adult life. In *Journal A*, he records visiting on 1st November 1757 a M. de Watteville at Luins near Lausanne, where the family held the seigniorship since the 17th century. In a letter to Sheffield of the 10th May 1792, Gibbon refers to Rodolphe Sigmund de Watteville, 'with whom you dined at my house last year', who was a banneret of Lausanne and commander of the Swiss troops then defending Geneva against the French. (*Letters*, Vol. III, p. 277.)

history would have for Gibbon in 1755, and the authority that the book would retain for him in later years, when he would have to consider carefully the problems of early Swiss chronology.

Another authority on the origins of the Swiss nation that Gibbon had read even before his 1755 tour was Loys de Bochat. His three volumes of *Mémoires Critiques* had more of an antiquarian nature than de Watteau's history and are aptly described in the *Biographie Universelle*: 'Cet ouvrage, rempli de recherches curieuses, est écrit avec trop de diffusion.'¹⁵⁶ There are extracts from it in the 1755 "Common Place Book" and twice 'Monsieur De Bochat' is mentioned in the 1755 *Journal de mon voyage*. As already noted in Chapter 2 above, he was the 'digne Magistrat'¹⁵⁷ referred to, without being named, in *The Letter on the Government of Berne* for trying in vain to raise the status of the Academy in Lausanne to a University. He was well known in Lausanne as the former Professor of Law at the Academy who had succeeded Jean Barbeyrac in that position in 1717, and from 1741 until his death on 3rd April 1754 he had been the Lieutenant-Bailiff of the city. By chance, he had an indirect part in Gibbon's coming to Lausanne in the first place, in that his family was known to Edward Eliot who had advised Gibbon's father on the suitability of Lausanne for his son.¹⁵⁸ The date of Loys de Bochat's death is included in a list in Gibbon's

156. The full title of the work is *Mémoires critiques, pour servir d'éclaircissemens sur divers points de l'histoire ancienne de la Suisse* which was printed in three volumes at Lausanne, 1747-9.

157. Footnote 83 above.

158. G. R. de Beer in *Gibbon and his world*, London, 1968, (p. 19) explains how Edward Eliot had been the companion of Philip Stanhope, the natural son of Lord Chesterfield, who had been sent to Lausanne in 1746 because of the family connections of Solomon Dayrolles, Lord Chesterfield's secretary. Dayrolles had two cousins who were married to Charles-Guillaume Loys de Bochat and Samuel Deyverdun, the father of Gibbon's friend. Philip Stanhope had attended a course of lectures of Loys de Bochat (*Miscellanea*, p.72).

handwriting of events in his early life down to 1754.¹⁵⁹ This is significant because, although Gibbon does not mention him in his *Memoirs*, it supports the idea that his family had a great influence on Gibbon's life in Switzerland from the beginning. Loys de Bochat's widow lived in the family house called La Grotte, where Gibbon visited frequently during his second stay in Lausanne. She eventually left the house to her nephew and Gibbon's friend, Georges Deyverdun, and it subsequently became Gibbon's home.

It is therefore remarkable that Gibbon is silent in his *Memoirs* about Loys de Bochat, whose works and family were so well known to him and whose death was one of the main events of his first year in Lausanne. There is a suggestion in the *Journal de mon voyage* that he recognised his antiquarian studies to be somewhat speculative and not always reliable when he relates how Loys de Bochat had been challenged by a fourteen-year-old Swiss scholar over his interpretation of the ruins at Avenches. Even so, Gibbon is respectful to 'le plus savant antiquaire qu'il y eut alors en Suisse,' who, although he did not surrender his own views, was 'fort content d'avoir trouvé un si savant adversaire.'¹⁶⁰ Gibbon's private thoughts, however, confirm the impression given in the *Journal de mon voyage* and are revealed in two entries in his *Journal* of his second stay in Lausanne. The first is for 26th August 1763, when he relates that after breakfast he went up to the library of the Academy to consult an article of 'M. de Bochat' on the worship of Egyptian divinities in Rome. He had been reading the Sixth Satire of Juvenal and was inspired to examine the piece in the *Mercure Suisse* of 1742, but Gibbon was disappointed:

mais je vois qu'il est tout hypothétique et d'une hypothèse très

159. Published by D. M. Low in *Journal A*, pp. xlv-xlvii. The date of Loys de Bochat's death is one of six events recorded for the first year of Gibbon's residence in Lausanne.

160. *Miscellanea*, p. 61.

chimerique, savoir que ce culte a du passer de l’Egypte en Grèce et de la Grèce en Italie par les Colonies longtems avant Romulus.¹⁶¹

The second entry is dated 10th March 1764; he has found a review in the forty-seventh volume of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l’Europe* of the work which he was familiar with during his first stay in Lausanne: the *Mémoires Critiques*. His comment explains his silence thereafter on Loys de Bochat: ‘Vaine et futile science des Etymologies!’¹⁶² Unlike de Watteville, he has no citation in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and, by the time he wrote the *Memoirs*, Gibbon may have felt Loys de Bochat would have insufficient interest for English readers in the future, in spite of the importance of his personal influence on Gibbon during his residence in Switzerland.

In view of Gibbon’s enthusiasm for the subject of Swiss liberty, apparent as early as 1755, and given only a partial and necessarily restricted outlet in the unfinished *Letter on the Government of Berne*, the question arises as to why he did not proceed with his history of Switzerland, rather than embarking upon his *Essai sur l’étude de la littérature* before he left Lausanne in the spring of 1758. When Gibbon wrote to David Hume in 1767 with a draft of his eventual Swiss history, he referred to his first stay in Switzerland as the inspiration for his plan of writing -

a general history of that brave and free people, so little known to the rest of Europe, but whom I had studied with some attention. This design was dropt almost as soon as conceived, from the almost unsurmountable difficulty of procuring proper materials, as they were mostly in German a language I am totally unacquainted with.¹⁶³

161. *Journal B*, p.10.

162. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

163. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 218.

This reason is also given in his *Journal* for 26th July 1762 when he wrote about his consideration of subjects for historical composition and disclosed his preference for *The History of the Liberty of the Swiss* -

But the materials of this history are inaccessible to me, fast locked up in the obscurity of a barbarous old German language, which I am totally ignorant of, and which I cannot bring myself to study for that sole object.¹⁶⁴

Instead of his preferred choice, his studies at Lausanne, including his correspondence with the professors of Zurich, Paris and Göttingen, led him naturally into a defence of the value of a detailed knowledge of the Latin Classics for the philosophical historian. The attraction of becoming known as a man of letters, as he became familiar with the writings of the contributors to the *Encyclopédie* during his first residence in Lausanne, especially Montesquieu and Voltaire, would have affected his choice. There is evidence by 1758 to suggest he was already inclined to philosophical history, which was to be given pride of place in the *Essai*. That inclination would have caused him to waver, after his return to England, between completing the *Essai* and pursuing the Swiss project as his preferred subject. However, the distractions of the Militia and the persuasion of his father, intent on furthering his son's prospects of a career in diplomacy, led him to concentrate on completing the *Essai* and arranging for its publication in 1761. With the return of peace in 1763 and the ability to travel abroad again, the Swiss project became attractive once more.

¹⁶⁴. *Journal A*, pp. 103-4.

4 THE *ESSAI SUR L'ÉTUDE DE LA LITTÉRATURE*

*I had reserved twenty [copies] for my friends at Lausanne, as the first fruits of my education and a grateful token of my remembrance.*¹⁶⁵

It is possible, as Chapter 2 has shown by the dating of *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, to assess Gibbon's political views as formed by his first residence in Lausanne. By examining his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, it is likewise possible to take 'the measure of his mind'¹⁶⁶ on a wide range of literary, cultural, philosophical and religious subjects, at the end of, and immediately after, his first period in Lausanne.

In the *Journal* commenced in the summer of 1761, shortly after the publication of the *Essai*, Gibbon looked back over a period of more than three years to record in some detail the progress of its composition. For March 8th 1758, he wrote:

I began my *Essai sur l'Étude de la Litterature* and wrote the 23 first chapters except the following ones, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, before I left Swisserland.¹⁶⁷

After his return to England, when he had settled for the summer with his father and stepmother in the manor house at Buriton, near Petersfield, he could record for the 11th July:

I took in hand again my essay and in about six weeks finished it from

¹⁶⁵ *Memoirs*, p. 102.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁶⁷ *Journal A*, p.7. Gibbon left Lausanne on 11th April.

C. 23-55 (except 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and Note * to C. 38) besides a number of chapters from C. 55 to the end which are now struck out.¹⁶⁸

The next entry on the *Essai* is:

Feb. 11th 1759. Being down at Beriton (sic) for a few days, I wrote the Chapters of my Essay, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, the note * to C. 38 and the first part of the preface.¹⁶⁹

There is no further entry about the *Essai* until much nearer the actual compilation of the diary, when for January 11th 1761 he regrets that he was not able to pursue any studies for seven or eight months because of his military duties; but, at last, when he was encamped at Dover for two months,

Recollecting some thoughts I had formerly had in relation to the System of Paganism, which I intended to make use of in my *Essai*, I resolved to read Tully de Natura Deorum, and finished it in about a month.¹⁷⁰

Finally, for the 23rd April 1761, he records:

Being at length, by my father's advice determined to publish my *Essai*, I revised it with great care, made many alterations, struck out a considerable part, and wrote the chapters from 57-78, which I was obliged to copy out fair myself.¹⁷¹

This account of how the *Essai* was composed establishes that much of the work was the result of his studies in Lausanne. There was little time

168. *Journal A*, p. 9.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

171. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5. Almost all of the published text together with the 'struck out' passages are in autograph in Add. Mss. 34,880, scattered between ff. 130 and 184. Peter Ghosh has analysed the manuscript in detail to illustrate its main stages and structure in an article entitled 'Gibbon's First Thoughts: Rome, Christianity and the *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature* 1758-61' in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. LXXXV, 1995. The *Essai* was printed by T. Becket & P. A. De Hondt 'dans le Strand' with a preface by Gibbon dated 3 Février, 1759, with an addendum dated 16 Avril, 1761, and a dedication to his father in English; an introductory letter, addressed 'À l'Auteur' and dated 16 Juin, 1761, was added by Matthew Maty, whom Gibbon had first consulted in London in 1758 and who read the proofs prior to publication. The quotations in this chapter are from *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 1-93, unless otherwise stated; references to the chapter numbers are as published rather than to the Arabic numbers used in the manuscript.

amid his preoccupation with the militia to develop new sources of inspiration, with the exception of his reading of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, in January and February 1761. That caused Gibbon to make the only major alteration to the structure of his first draft, completed in August 1758, only three months after his arrival in England. A French prisoner at Petersfield had made a copy of the draft and Gibbon had sent it in October that year for criticism and advice to Matthew Maty, sub-librarian at the British Museum.¹⁷² In spite of the later revisions and alterations prior to publication, Gibbon considered the *Essai* to be 'the first fruits' of his education in Lausanne when he sent twenty copies to his friends there as 'a grateful token of remembrance.'¹⁷³

It has to be recognised that the *Essai* is no more than a survey in miniature of the literary culture of western Europe by a young scholar, stimulated by his good fortune in finding himself in contact with Voltaire and the writings of the men of letters of the French Enlightenment. Its eighty-three chapters, twelve more than were required for the whole of *The Decline and Fall*, reflected the brevity of Montesquieu's chapters in *De l'Esprit des Lois* and amounted to only seventy-eight pages, as re-printed by Sheffield in *The Miscellaneous Works*. Although it shows greater ambition to impress the public mind than his previous writings from his first residence in Lausanne, Gibbon delayed its publication, went to considerable effort to revise its contents before releasing it, and would not allow its re-publication when his fame was established as the historian of the Roman

172. Maty, 1718-76, became principal librarian in 1772. He had been the editor of the French review of English literature called *Journal Britannique*, 1750-5, printed in Holland. Gibbon was annoyed with him for not commenting on the draft in writing and demanded the draft back from him in December 1758. (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 116.) Nevertheless, he asked Maty to correct the sheets of the *Essai* in April 1761. (*Journal A*, p. 25.)

173. *Memoirs*, p. 102.

Empire. If it had not been for his father's wish that Gibbon should have something to show for his studies in order to further the possibility of a diplomatic career, it must be doubtful whether Gibbon would have sought to publish the work after the initial momentum had been lost in 1759.

He might have feared that the style and range of subject matter of the *Essai* would have seemed too inflated for its slender frame; it is at times sententious and obscure¹⁷⁴ under the influence of Montesquieu's *penchant* for brevity already seen in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*;¹⁷⁵ its argument is pieced together inconsequentially in places as a result of the revisions;¹⁷⁶ and its title is misleadingly too general.¹⁷⁷ Yet, in spite of these faults, it contains some memorable historical illustrations and gives significant indications of Gibbon's intellectual development as a result of his education in Lausanne.

For the modern reader with some knowledge of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the very first words written in Lausanne are like a portent of the future historian. 'L'Histoire des empires est celle de la misère des hommes. L'histoire des sciences est celle de leur grandeur et de leur bonheur.' Yet the concept of empires can easily mislead and here it is not

174. For example, in Chapter III, Gibbon introduces the Renaissance with the sentence: 'Si les Grecs n'avoient été esclaves, les Latines seroient encore barbares.'

175. cf. footnote 77 above.

176. '... if we except some introductory pages, all the remaining chapters might indifferently be reversed or transposed.' (*Memoirs*, p. 103.)

177. The manuscript draft shows that Gibbon had originally entitled his essay: *Reflexions sur l'Etude des Belles-Lettres*. This did not satisfy him because he added the comment on the reverse of the previous page: 'Pour eviter toute equivoque, j'avertis une fois pour tout [ce] que j'entends par l'Etude des Belles-Lettres, celle des Anciens, et de l'Antiquité Grecque et Latine.' (Gibbon's underlining.) This is a more accurate description of the finished work. When he makes an addition on 23rd April 1761 to Chapter LV, as numbered in the final revision, he then calls it an addition to 'mon essai sur l'etude de la Litterature.' (Add. Mss. 34,880.)

associated with territorial aggrandisement,¹⁷⁸ but with the dominance of successive intellectual fashions upon the minds of men of letters. 'L'empire de la mode est fondé sur l'inconstance des hommes; empire dont l'origine est si frivole et dont les effets sont si funestes.'¹⁷⁹ In a remarkably succinct survey of intellectual activity from the time of Alexander the Great to Newton, metaphysics and dialectic, politics and eloquence, history and poetry, grammar and jurisprudence, scholastic philosophy, belles-lettres, physics and mathematics are presented as a succession of prevailing modes of thought.

Il seroit digne d'un habile homme de suivre cette révolution dans les religions, les gouvernements, les mœurs, qui ont successivement égaré, désolé et corrompu les hommes.

Such scornful criticism in the verbs of the concluding clause of this sentence reveals his strong feeling about the exclusive monopoly that different disciplines have held over the creative mind. Here empire is the metaphor for fashion which can prevail over understanding and science and can even damage humanity through its limitations and neglect of balance.

In its political context, the idea of empire for Gibbon at this stage of his development, as already seen in his early writings, was associated with the history of Switzerland. The dominating forces which could oppress popular aspirations in that context were Austria, Burgundy, France and, on the more local scene of Gibbon's experience, Berne, and at risk were the liberty of the Swiss and, in particular, the society of Lausanne. In the *Essai*, however, the notion of empire has been transposed to take on intellectual

178. As John Robertson implies, for the sake of his argument about Gibbon's dislike of imperial power, at the beginning of his essay entitled: 'Gibbon's Roman Empire as a universal monarchy: the *Decline and Fall* and the imperial idea in early modern Europe' in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, edited by Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

179. Chapter II.

associations which cause Gibbon to challenge his contemporaries' concentration on physics and mathematics to the neglect of antiquity. His course of reading in the Classics during the later phases of his residence in Lausanne has led him to enter, at a relatively late stage but with all the ardour of youth, the controversy of the ancients and moderns and the task which he had set himself was to uphold the value of understanding in depth the world of classical literature.

The controversy arose from the continuing admiration in which Latin and Greek had been held since the Italian Renaissance.¹⁸⁰ 'Moderns' and 'ancients' shared that admiration but the moderns had more confidence in the present and future and questioned whether the standards of antiquity were supreme in all matters: were the writings of antiquity only to be emulated but never to be surpassed? There were French and English versions of the controversy, and at the turn of the seventeenth century the argument in England was centred on the writings of Sir William Temple and William Wotton. Gibbon was to own the works of both and was to refer to Wotton arguing 'with solid sense against the lively exotic fancies' of Temple when he discussed the fate of the Alexandrian library at the time of the Moslem invasion in Chapter LI of *The Decline and Fall*.¹⁸¹ However, when he wrote his *Essai*, he gave his attention to France, 'to which my ideas were confined.'¹⁸² The influence of Lausanne caused him to write in French and to consider the writings of French philosophes, especially Voltaire and

180. The controversy is discussed extensively by Joseph M. Levine in his two books: *Humanism and History, Origins of Modern Historiography*, 1987, and *The Battle of the Books, History and Literature in the Augustan Age*, 1991, both published in New York and London.

181. Vol. V, p. 484, footnote 144. Gibbon had already read Wotton's *History of Rome* when writing his *Essai* and refers to his work in a footnote. (*Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p.33.)

182. *Memoirs*, p. 99. 'in France, to which my ideas were confined, the learning and language of Greece and Rome were neglected by a philosophic age... the new appellation of *Erudits* was contemptuously applied to the successors of Lipsius and Casaubon'.

D'Alembert who were the two most associated with Geneva.¹⁸³ Both of them wrote in terms which questioned the value of erudite scholarship remote from current practical issues and both were closely concerned with the discoveries of modern science. In reviewing the changing intellectual fashions, Gibbon observes that the current interest in physics and mathematics had led to the disparagement of the poetry of antiquity. The images of pastoral poetry may be limited, Gibbon concedes, but the images created by the poets of antiquity about man and art, in which nature, religion, government, and customs have all been reflected, are capable of arousing the imagination of any generation, however remote. There is no limit to the validity of poetic reference and the reader of the young Gibbon is reminded of Shelley's subsequent claim that 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'¹⁸⁴ Gibbon sees military enterprise as a human activity which has been treated heroically in the poetry of antiquity. That was a subject which the best of modern poets could not deal with so imaginatively, and he uses lines inspired by the verse of antiquity in Voltaire's poem on the battle of Fontenoy to demonstrate that the battles of Homer have more poetic interest than those of the Maréchal de Saxe and the Duke of Cumberland.¹⁸⁵

If the truths and beauty of heroic poetry are not to be lost under a different sky and in a different age, Gibbon stresses the importance of being able to share the viewpoint of the Greeks and Romans through a detailed knowledge of their era. He reiterates the need to understand the spirit of antiquity. 'Horace et Plaute sont presque' inintelligibles à quiconque n'a pas

183. D'Alembert's controversial article on Geneva had been published in the *Encyclopédie* in 1757.

184. Quoted by Peter Gay in *The Science and Freedom* volume of his *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, New York and London, 1977, p.215.

185. Chapter XI.

appris à vivre, et à penser comme le peuple Romain.’¹⁸⁶ It is impossible to understand the design, the art and details of Virgil’s poetry without knowledge of the historical background, such as the laws and the religion of the Romans, the geography of Italy, the character of Augustus, and his relations with the senate and the people. Gibbon sustains his defence of erudition on these aesthetic and historical grounds, the historian in him intermittently coming to the fore with specific examples of the way poets have treated events in Roman history.

The illustration which Gibbon uses to most effect is the way the Latin poets have contrasted the early rusticity of Rome, covered in straw, with the palaces, princes and provinces of the future capital of the world. The poet who gave the best evocation of this contrasting scene was Virgil. ‘Il l’a peint des traits d’un grand maître.’¹⁸⁷ How lively is this contrast between early Rome and imperial Rome for the reader who has a deep knowledge of antiquity, whereas ‘il est fade aux yeux de celui qui n’apporte à la lecture de Virgile, d’autre préparation qu’un goût naturel, et quelque connoissance de la langue Latine.’ The argument for the benefits of classical scholarship by the young scholar writing in the home of Pavillard is presented with winning enthusiasm. Precocious though the tone might seem, it would be cynical to doubt the genuineness of Gibbon’s early appreciation of the poets of antiquity. He had acquired a lasting pleasure in reading the poetry of Rome and Greece, as during his Grand Tour when staying in the countryside outside Lausanne he found ‘Horace and Virgil, Juvenal and Ovid were my assiduous companions’, and as in the interval of time between

186. Chapter XVI.

187. Chapter XVII.

the composition of the third and fourth volumes of *The Decline and Fall*, he turned for recreation to the authors of antiquity and read 'with new pleasure the Iliad and Odyssey.'¹⁸⁸

For Gibbon, the verse of Virgil and the precepts of Horace in his *Ars Poetica* fixed the taste of the Romans in the time of Augustus and they continued to give understanding of their era. He imagines the *Georgics*, by way of an illustration to his argument, helping to reconcile the veterans of war to a pastoral life subject to customs and laws. At this point in the *Essai*,¹⁸⁹ at the end of the draft composed in Lausanne, Gibbon turns to a discussion of the art of criticism, seeing Aristotle as its founder. There have been many practitioners of the art and he names Le Clerc at their head in the most recent century,¹⁹⁰ but none has defined the art as Gibbon would wish. His own definition is unexceptional: 'La critique est, selon moi, l'art de juger des écrits et des écrivains, ce qu'ils ont dit, s'ils l'ont bien dit, s'ils ont dit vrai.'¹⁹¹ More penetrating is his analysis of the consequences of each element of this triple construction. From the first flows the findings of the grammarians, the scholarship of textual criticism, in which Gibbon already had personal experience from his correspondence with Breitinger and other academics during his residence in Lausanne; from the second derive the theories of poetry and eloquence; and from the third, opens an immense field, involving grammarians, rhetoricians and historians, of which 'Les

188. *Memoirs*, p. 132 and p. 164.

189. Chapter XXIII.

189. Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736), professor of philosophy and of ecclesiastical history at the Remonstrant (Arminian) Seminary of Amsterdam. Amongst eighty-one volumes of his works that Gibbon was to own, Keynes lists two editions of his *Ars critica* and the twenty-six volumes of his *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*.

191. These are the last words from the section composed in Lausanne to be used in the published version. In a footnote to the definition, inserted on the reverse of the previous page of the manuscript, he adds the qualification: 'Il faut borner ce vrai au vrai historique, à la vérité de leurs témoignages, et non de leurs opinions. Cette dernière espèce de vérité est plutôt du ressort de la logique que de celui de la critique.' (Add. Mss. 34,800.)

prétensions exclusives des premiers ont nui non seulement à leur travail, mais à celui de leurs confrères.' Here there is a sense of progression which clearly follows Gibbon's own development from textual criticism, to the appreciation of the classical poets, to the writing of history.

The view of Kant that his age was 'the very age of Criticism'¹⁹² is anticipated by Gibbon. The attributes of the critic are 'justice d'esprit, la finesse, la pénétration'¹⁹³ and, switching to the first person singular for a moment, Gibbon gives a picture of himself and his present role in the study in the manor house at Buriton:

Je suis le littérateur dans son cabinet, je le vois entouré des productions de tous les siècles; sa bibliothèque en est remplie: son esprit en est éclairé, sans en être chargé. Il étend ses regards de tous côtés. L'auteur le plus éloigné du travail de l'instant, n'est pas oublié: un trait lumineux pourroit s'y rencontrer, qui confirmeroit les découvertes du critique ou qui ébranleroit ses hypothèses. Le travail de l'érudit est achevé.¹⁹⁴

Gibbon is sure that the importance of such erudition, inspired by the experience of his predecessors, should not be eclipsed by the more scientific interests of his age, such as geometry. Criticism balances degrees of probability in arriving at the truth about the external world, whereas geometry concerns itself with proofs which are found only within itself.¹⁹⁵ Criticism can suggest ways in which doubts about chronology, sometimes

192. Quoted by Peter Gay in *The Rise of Modern Paganism* volume of his *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, op. cit.*, p.132.

193. Chapter XXIV.

194. There is an element of wishful thinking in this character sketch which was, however, realised later in Gibbon's libraries at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne. Of the library at Buriton on his return in 1758, Gibbon writes in his *Memoirs*: 'My father's study at Buriton was stuffed with much trash of the last age, with much High-church Divinity and politics which have long since gone to their proper place: yet it contained some valuable Editions of the Classics and the fathers, the choice as it would seem of Mr Law; and many English publications of the times had been occasionally added. From this slender beginning I have gradually formed a numerous and Select library, the foundation of my works and the best comfort of my life both at home and abroad.' (pp. 96-7.) Twenty volumes of the *Mémoires de littérature* of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres were amongst his early additions, referred to in Chapter V of the *Essai* as 'Une de ces sociétés qui ont mieux immortalisé Louis XIV.'

195. Chapter XXVI.

the result of useful but dangerous pyrrhonism, can be limited and their causes removed. Gibbon illustrates this point in a relatively lengthy historical argument arising from his study of apparent anomalies in the text of a treaty between the Romans and the Carthaginians.¹⁹⁶ There is in criticism the rare quality of discernment which can make use of any facts. Later in the *Essai*, he clinches this argument by challenging D'Alembert who had written that at the end of a century he wished all facts to be gathered, sorted, and the worthless destroyed. Why not be like the botanist who preserves plants until some use as yet unknown is discovered?¹⁹⁷ Gibbon points to Montesquieu as someone who has shown how facts that might appear insignificant can be used to establish general truths.

The middle third of the *Essai*, which comes before the section that Gibbon added in 1761 on the nature of paganism in antiquity, contains the most sustained argument in a work which overall can seem full of digressions. Notwithstanding the revision which failed to give a sense of unity to the work preceding its publication, the argument in this middle section, written during the summer of 1758 at Buriton, has a momentum inspired by the original idea conceived in Lausanne of entering into the controversy of the ancients and moderns to defend the need for scholarship to understand the reality of situations past and present. In all knowledge there is reasoning about facts, and most prized for Gibbon amongst those who reason is 'l'esprit philosophique.'¹⁹⁸ He reflects that it is less frequently found in his day than 'l'esprit géomètre' but claims that whoever is familiar

196. Chapters XXVIII to XXXIII, composed in February, 1759.

197. Chapter LIII, written earlier, on returning to Buriton, in July 1758. 'Toutes les plantes ne sont pas utiles dans la médecine, cependant ils ne cessent d'en découvrir de nouvelles. Ils espèrent que le génie et les travaux heureux y verront des propriétés jusqu'à présent cachées.'

198. Chapter XLIV.

with the writings of Cicero, Tacitus, Bacon, Leibnitz, Fontenelle and Montesquieu will know what he means. Nevertheless, Gibbon offers a definition as follows:

L'esprit philosophique consiste à pouvoir remonter aux idées simples; à saisir et à combiner les premiers principes. Le coup d'œil de son possesseur est juste, mais en même tems étendu. Placé sur un hauteur, il embrasse une grande étendue de país, dont il se forme une image nette et unique, pendant que des esprits aussi justes, mais plus bornés, n'en découvrent qu'une partie. Il peut être géomètre, antiquaire, musicien, mais il est toujours philosophe; et à force de pénétrer les premiers principes de son art, il lui devient supérieur.¹⁹⁹

A remote memory of this passage may have influenced the choice of Gibbon's final view of Rome from the top of the Capitoline Hill in the concluding chapter of *The Decline and Fall*.²⁰⁰ There he exemplified the notion of precision and perspective which can be acquired from seeing a subject from above. In the *Essai*, Gibbon argues that in a multitude of facts there will be those which the discerning critic or philosophe, as he tends to call him, can use to judge the motives of an act or the distinguishing feature of a character. The significant facts in the chaos of events are rare, and rarer still are the minds which can glimpse them and draw them out.²⁰¹

Such insights into the role of the philosophe are clearly as valid for the historian as the man of letters. 'Si les philosophes ne sont pas toujours historiens, il seroit du moins à souhaiter que les historiens fussent philosophes.'²⁰² Gibbon's glimpse of what is attainable by the philosophical mind evidently remained with him to influence his philosophical approach to history in *The Decline and Fall*. Later, when responding to criticism of the first volume of *The History*, he was to draw out the ethical purpose of

199. Chapter XLVI.

200. Vol. VII, p. 313.

201. Chapter XLIX.

202. Chapter LII.

examining facts, when he argued that the historian

owes to himself, to the present age, and to posterity, a just and perfect delineation of all that may be praised, of all that may be excused, and of all that may be censured.²⁰³

At the time of writing his *Essai*, he is sure that it is the study of ancient literature which is conducive to developing and exercising the philosophical mind. In the authors of antiquity can be found independent minds questioning the manners of their time, country and religion.

Je cherche chez les Grecs des fauteurs de la démocratie; des enthousiastes de l'amour de la patrie chez les Romains; chez les sujets des Commode, des Sévère ou des Caracalla, des apologistes du pouvoir absolu; et chez l'Epicurien de l'antiquité, la condamnation de sa religion.²⁰⁴

What a spectacle of human error and truths arrived at fortuitously awaits the philosophical mind when examining the customs of any race! 'Un ouvrage Iroquois, fut-il rempli d'absurdités, seroit un morceau impayable.' Such a source of information would offer unique experience of customs and religion different from one's own.

Though Gibbon is considering the evidence of literature, he is writing here as the historian of ideas. He goes on in the same chapter to describe in the first person plural his own interests:

Quelquefois nous serions frappés et instruits par la contrariété des idées qui en naîtroient; nous en chercherions les raisons; nous suivrions l'ame d'erreur en erreur. Quelquefois aussi nous reconnoîtrions avec plaisir nos principes, mais découverts par d'autres routes, et presque toujours modifiés et altérés. Nous y apprendrions non seulement à avouer, mais à sentir la force des préjugés, à ne nous étonner jamais de ce qui nous paroît le plus absurde, et à nous défier souvent de ce qui nous semble le mieux établi.

Such delight in the incongruity of ideas and the ambivalence of beliefs is

203. *A Vindication of some Passages in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1779, in *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 631.

204. Chapter XLVII.

expressed more fully in his *Vindication*, quoted above, where in his more general remarks on the criticisms of Mr. Davis of Oxford University of his account in Chapters XV and XVI of *The Decline and Fall* of the growth and persecution of early Christianity, he was to write:

It would be amusing enough to calculate the weight of prejudice in the air of Rome, of Oxford, of Paris, and of Holland; and sometimes to observe the irregular tendency of papists towards freedom, sometimes to remark the unnatural gravitation of protestants towards slavery. But it is useful to borrow the assistance of so many learned and ingenious men, who have viewed the first ages of the church in every light, and from every situation. If we skilfully combine the passions and prejudices, the hostile motives and intentions, of the several theologians, we may frequently extract knowledge from credulity, moderation from zeal, and impartial truth from the most disingenuous controversy.²⁰⁵

This Gibbonian sense of amusement and of value in the absurdities and contradictions to be found in entrenched positions was a feature of his scholarship, giving a feeling of ambivalence to his assessment of different cultures when they come into contact, as in the account in Chapter XXXIV of *The Decline and Fall*²⁰⁶ of the embassy to the royal village of Attila in the plains of Upper Hungary of the Byzantine diplomats, with their secret intent of murdering their host. Gibbon had written in Chapter XLVII of his *Essai*:

J'aime à voir les jugemens des hommes, prendre une teinture de leurs préventions, à les considérer qui n'osent pas tirer des principes qu'ils reconnoissent pour être justes, les conclusions qu'ils sentent être exactes. J'aime à les surprendre qui détestent chez la barbare, ce qu'ils admirent chez le Grec, et qui qualifient la même histoire d'impie chez le Payen, et de sacrée chez le Juif.

He followed this with an illustration of absurdity and paradox, in even the most enlightened age, in the way the Romans could see united in the person

205. *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p.589. An example of how Gibbon achieved this detached viewpoint is provided in *The Decline and Fall* in his discussion of the Iconoclasts in Chapter XLIX. In footnote 18 he lists his sources as the Acts of the Councils, and the modern works of Catholic and Protestant authors, and adds with the serene confidence of his well-established practice, 'With this mutual aid, and opposite tendency, it is easy for us to poise the balance with philosophic indifference.' (Vol. V, pp. 268-9.)

206. Vol. III, pp. 459-69.

of Caesar the qualities of a god, a priest and an atheist. Gibbon was already savouring the incongruities of customs and of religion which would inspire his description of religious concord in the age of the Antonines:

The various modes of worship...were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful.²⁰⁷

Gibbon presents history in his *Essai* as the science of identifying connections and consequences among a multitude of events. He formulates some rules for the historian which again were to receive their fullest statement in his *Vindication*, twenty years later. The philosophical mind has the rare quality of judging the motives of an action or an element in a character. A philosophe who has more judgement than erudition will need to be careful to proportion the causes to the effects, so as not to 'bâtir sur l'action d'un homme le caractère d'un siècle.'²⁰⁸ More attention should be given to the facts which conform naturally to a system than to those which are discovered after conceiving the system. More can be revealed by small events on the domestic scene than grand public events. He confides a practice of his own:

Pour décider si la vertu triomphait chez un peuple dans un certain siècle, j'observe plutôt ses actions que ses discours. Pour le condamner comme vicieux, je fais plus attention à ses discours qu'à ses actions.²⁰⁹

In illustrating his remarks from the reign of Tiberius and in comparing the more philosophical mind of Tacitus with that of Livy, Gibbon is already beginning to put into action his future historical method. Tacitus is the historian who has most fulfilled his ideal in antiquity. He interprets the chain of events and fills our soul with the most wise lessons; unlike Livy, he does

207. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 31.

208. Chapter XLIX.

209. Chapter L.

not neglect the laws of decemvirs, nor their character, their faults, their connection with the genius of the Roman people and with their own ambitious designs. Already Gibbon has formed the judgement which he maintains in *The Decline and Fall*: 'Tacitus, the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts.'²¹⁰

Of the most recent examples of philosophic history, the *Considérations sur les Causes de la Grandeur des Romains et de leur Décadence* of Montesquieu held greatest sway over Gibbon's mind at the time of the *Essai*. The theory of general causes in the hands of a Montesquieu will be a philosophic history of man:

Il nous les feroit voir réglant la grandeur et la chute des empires,²¹¹ empruntant successivement les traits de la fortune, de la prudence, du courage, et de la foiblesse, agissant sans le concours des causes particulières, et quelquefois même triomphant d'elles. Supérieur à l'amour de ses propres systèmes, dernière passion du sage, il auroit su reconnoître que, malgré l'étendue de ces causes, leur effet ne laisse pas d'être borné, et qu'il se montre principalement dans ces événemens généraux, dont l'influence lente mais sûre change la face de la terre, sans qu'on puisse s'appercevoir de l'époque de ce changement, et surtout dans les mœurs, les religions, et tout ce qui est soumis au joug de l'opinion. Voilà une partie des leçons que ce philosophe eût tirées de ce sujet. Pour moi, j'y trouve simplement une occasion de m'essayer à penser.²¹²

Gibbon is already feeling his way to a theme which would occupy his most productive years. 'Qu'une vaste carrière s'ouvre à mes réflexions!...'

As Gibbon was to show in his *Memoirs*, his ability to reveal the state

210. Vol. I, p. 230. Of Tacitus's account of the early German tribes, Gibbon there writes: 'The expressive conciseness of his descriptions has deserved to exercise the diligence of innumerable antiquarians, and to excite the genius and penetration of the philosophic historians of our own times.'

211. Empires are now associated again with the destiny of man living in political unities, rather than with the oppression of intellectual modes.

212. Chapter LV.

of his mind at a moment of revelation was an abiding characteristic of his writings. His interest, on the completion of his first period of residence in Lausanne, in practising the science of philosophical history could not have been more clearly stated. The rules and resources for that career are already displayed in the *Essai*, not only in the illustrations from Roman history and the recognition of Montesquieu's role as the most enlightened interpreter of the grandeur of Rome and its decline, but also in the wealth of references to books which Gibbon will collect in his library and use in the composition of *The Decline and Fall*. Amongst the many specific citations, excluding those of poets, playwrights and satirists, are those of more than twenty Latin and Greek historians which will be used in the history. They range in time from Herodotus and Thucydides to Ammianus Marcellinus, the soldier-historian who accompanied the Emperor Julian on his Persian expedition and who was to elicit from Gibbon one of his most sustained pieces of narrative writing in Chapter XXIV of *The Decline and Fall*. Some of Gibbon's most trusted interpreters of Roman history, such as the ecclesiastical historians, Tillemont and Fleury, and the geographer, d'Anville, are also quoted in the *Essai*. A brief reference to the Moslem religion in Chapter LVII of the *Essai*²¹³ causes him to cite three of the authorities which were of most use to him in the account of the origin and growth of Mohammedanism in Chapters L and LI of *The Decline and Fall*: d'Herbelot de Molainville, George Sale and Adrian Reland. Gibbon had already the apparatus of a historian, as well as the deep understanding of the poets of antiquity, to bring to the task which he had set himself whilst still in Lausanne.

213. 'Jamais Musulman n'a hésité sur l'unité de Dieu.' This was a feature of Mohammedanism that Gibbon remained so impressed with that in *The Decline and Fall* he was to refer to the followers of Mahomet as "Unitarians". (Vol. V, p. 362.)

His viewpoint, writing in the midst of the Seven Years War, was of course exceptional for an Englishman. It was the result of having completed his education in French-speaking Switzerland; it was that of a scholar who regarded the French philosophes as the leaders of intellectual activity, but who had reservations about their distrust of erudition in their desire to venture into all fields of human activity, as shown in the *Encyclopédie*.²¹⁴ In Lausanne, the new philosophical spirit had been personified for him in his encounter with Voltaire, and thereafter he had an understanding of the French Enlightenment to an extent which only Hume amongst his countrymen could emulate. The geographical orientation of his outlook in the *Essai* is reflected in the relative neglect of poets, critics and philosophers who have written in English. There is no reference to Shakespeare or Locke and there are only a few references to Bacon, Newton, Milton,²¹⁵ and Bentley.²¹⁶

On the nationally divisive issue of the relative importance of the influence of Descartes and Newton on the scientific interest of the age, Gibbon treads warily. He had already written in Lausanne in January 1758 his commentary on the corrections made by Newton to the chronology of early Roman history, and it is in that connection that Newton is mentioned

214. In a footnote to Chapter VI, Gibbon cites d'Alembert in the preliminary discourse of the *Encyclopédie* for bringing the term, 'un érudit', into contempt.

215. The 'imagination forte', which he allows Milton in the same sentence as 'la versification harmonieuse de Voltaire' (Chapter XXXVIII), may reflect the influence of Suzanne Curchod, who translated Milton into French. For Gibbon, describing the soil and climate of Arabia in Chapter I of *The Decline and Fall*, Milton remains 'our great poet' and quotes from *Paradise Lost* to evoke the spicy odours of the land. (Vol. V, p. 334, footnote 7.)

216. In a footnote to his preface, dated 'le 3 Février, 1759', Gibbon rather idiosyncratically draws the reader's attention to another source in English, the book with the title of *Polymetis* of Joseph Spence (1699-1768), describing it as a work of taste which should be better known in France, without mentioning it elsewhere in the *Essai*.

in the *Essai*.²¹⁷ Part of Gibbon's purpose in writing in French was to address directly the French distrust of erudition and his comparison of Descartes with Newton shows evidence of propitiation. In the manuscript of the *Essai*, written in Lausanne, Gibbon wrote 'Si Descartes ni connoissoit n'estimoit que le monde qu'il avoit créé, Son Vainqueur eleva un Systeme de Chronologie...' The published version is less provocative:

Si Descartes, livré tout entier à sa philosophie, méprisoit toute étude qui ne s'y rapportait pas, Newton ne dédaigna pas de construire un système de chronologie...²¹⁸

Maty, who advised Gibbon and was the author of the introductory letter to the *Essai*,²¹⁹ captures the ambivalent role of the Captain of the South Hampshire battalion at the time of its publication, intent on repelling the threat of a French invasion whilst addressing the French on their attitude to antiquity: 'Au milieu des succès de vos armes vous avez honoré les lettres de vos ennemis.'²²⁰

The introductory letter to the *Essai* has also a prescient remark about its significance: 'ce germe heureux d'ouvrages plus considérables.'²²¹ Maty had sensed that the young author already had the ability and resources to realise the role of the philosophical historian for himself. The first fruits of his education in Lausanne had indeed revealed the measure of his mind. In the next chapter, the argument will be that Gibbon was not so much discovering the historian in himself during his second stay in Lausanne,

217. Gibbon's *Remarques Critiques sur le Nouvelle Système de Chronologie du Chevalier Newton* are in Add. Mss. 34,880, where they are dated 20th January 1758, and are printed in *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp.152-69. Gibbon claims there that 'Son système de chronologie suffiroit seul pour lui assurer l'immortalité.' (p. 152.)

218. Chapter VII.

219. The introductory letter addressed to the author was inserted into the publication without Gibbon's prior knowledge, according to his *Memoirs* (p. 101).

220. *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 14.

221. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

after establishing his reputation as a man of letters,²²² but rather that, in renewing his interest in, and increasing his knowledge of, Roman history through his reading in Lausanne in preparation for his tour of Italy, he was equipping himself to be the future philosophical historian of the Roman Empire, as he had already imagined his career to be in the *Essai*.

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When Gibbon described in the *Essai* the absurdity and incongruity in the paganism of the most enlightened age of the Roman world, he could be interpreted as holding the detached view of an orthodox Christian. This impression would have been strengthened if he had retained the chapters which he wrote at Buriton in the summer of 1758 and later 'struck out'.²²³ They are still extant in his manuscript and consist of eight numbered paragraphs on the subject of how the literature of antiquity, supported by the evidence of nature,²²⁴ has increased our understanding of the Christian religion. Writers such as Plato, Seneca and Cicero had maintained the morality associated with the Christian era, he asserted, so that 'le Christianisme n'étoit point un nouveau joug impose aux hommes'; but the corruption of the age of Tiberius as described by Suetonius required the example of 'un homme obscur' from 'une nation méprisée de toute la terre.' His disciples announced the 'dieu d'un nouvel ordre' and

222. The argument of G. A. Bonnard in his essay, 'L'importance du deuxième séjour de Gibbon à Lausanne', in *Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature offerts à Charles Gilliard*, Lausanne, 1944.

223. *Journal A*, pp. 24-5.

224. 'La Physique partage avec les Belles Lettres l'honneur de défendre la religion, et il faut convenir que le nombre des preuves qu'elle lui fournit n'est égale que par leur solidité. Elles ont pour but l'Existence de l'Être suprême.' (The quotations from the "struck out" paragraphs are from Add. Mss. 34,880, ff. 153-5.)

On erige la croix sur les debris de Capitole.²²⁵ Le Magi et le Druide le Stoicien et l'Epicurien se reunissent à croire une doctrine qui etonne la raison et qui amortit.

These eight paragraphs were followed by one more, beginning 'Voila quelques reflexions qui m'ont paru solides sur les differentes utilités des Belles-Lettres', which was retained with some revision as the second of the two paragraphs of the-concluding Chapter LXXXIII. The eight paragraphs were replaced by a longer section, comprising Chapters LVI to LXXIX of the published work, which contains the account of the evolution of the pagan gods in the literature of the pre-Christian era, inserted by Gibbon in 1761 after reading Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. The new section breaks into the discussion of causes of events, rather than following it naturally as did the section on Christianity in the original draft, leaving three more chapters to resume the discussion of causality before the concluding chapter. The effect is to lengthen the *Essai* by some sixteen chapters at the cost of structural untidiness. Gibbon, when re-publication was no longer under consideration, claimed in his *Memoirs* to be 'not displeased with the enquiry into the origin and nature of the Gods of Polytheism' and went on to add further ideas on the subject.²²⁶ In replacing and covering from public view his reflections on the value of Christian morality and the need for the revelation of a new Divinity in the time of Tiberius, Gibbon remained content. His original draft, however, provides evidence that after his return from Lausanne, Gibbon still used the language of Christian revelation, in addition to that of

225. Gibbon remarkably anticipates with this image his visit to the Capitoline Hill and the effect that it would have on him in forming the idea of writing the history of the decline of Rome. (*Memoirs*, p. 136.)

226. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

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The *Essai*, as completed in its first version of 1759, may be seen as a work resulting entirely from his studies in Lausanne. It looks back to the controversy of the ancients and the moderns, as most recently raised in the writings of the *Encyclopédistes*, and the cause of classical scholarship is vigorously defended in terms of the insight that it gives to an understanding of the Augustan age. The importance of the composition in the development of Gibbon's career lies in the formulation of the philosophical methods, later to be more fully stated in the *Vindication*, which Gibbon will use in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to explore the vagaries of human motivation and behaviour. Its special significance for the subject of this thesis is the continental viewpoint that has become natural to Gibbon because of his enforced stay in Lausanne.

227. Ghosh in his article entitled 'Gibbon's First Thoughts: Rome, Christianity and *The Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature, 1758-61*', *loc. cit.*, sees the reason for the replacement of the paragraphs on Christianity as Gibbon's scepticism by 1761 about Christian revelation. He goes so far as to claim that his religious views had been reduced to fixity through his reading of the treatise *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* of Grotius at the end of 1759. Support for a change in Gibbon's attitude to the Christian miracles and mysteries at that time is given in the *Memoirs* (p. 211), although Gibbon's conclusion there can still be regarded as appeasing orthodoxy: 'the faith, as well as the virtue, of a Christian must be formed and fortified by the inspiration of Grace.' The continuing moderation and conciliatory nature of Gibbon's personal attitude to religion can be seen in his *Memoirs* where he condemns the attitude of some of the Paris salons during his visit of 1763: 'Yet I was often disgusted with the capricious tyranny of Madame Geoffrin, nor could I approve the intolerant zeal of the philosophers and Encyclopædists the friends of d'Olbach and Helvétius: they laughed at the scepticism of Hume, preached the tenets of Atheism with the bigotry of dogmatists, and damned all believers with ridicule and contempt.' (p. 127.)

5 THE IMPORTANCE OF GIBBON'S SECOND STAY IN LAUSANNE

*... notwithstanding all the pleasure I hope for in Italy
I own I shall quit this place with some unwillingness.*²²⁸

Gibbon returned to Lausanne on 25th May 1763, having taken exactly four months on his journey from England. He had waited until peace preliminaries had been signed with France in November 1762 and until the termination of his active militia service before undertaking his long anticipated visit to Italy.²²⁹ His first stop had been in Paris where, as a result of his reputation as the author of the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, he had introductions to the leading names of the Enlightenment in France. As he wrote in his *Memoirs*: 'the compliment of writing in the French language entitled me to some returns of civility and gratitude.'²³⁰ It was not, however, a reputation which completely satisfied him at the time. He wrote in his *Journal*:

...j'aurois voulu joindre celle d'homme de condition à laquelle j'avois des droits si legitimes. Je ne voulois pas que l'écrivain fit totalement disparoitre le Gentilhomme...Peut-etre que l'orgueil me faisoit illusion, et que je crus voir des procédès à mon egard qui n'existoient

228. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 168.

229. Gibbon had first revealed his ambition to visit Italy to his father in 1760. (*Letters*, Vol. I, pp.123-6.) In this undated letter, Italy is described as 'a country which every Scholar must long to see', and Gibbon looks forward to leaving England in the autumn and passing the winter at Lausanne 'with M. de Voltaire and my old friends.' In the winter of 1759-60, Gibbon had already begun to study Italian, recording in his *Journal*: 'I studied Italian this winter under M. Matzee, we read a Grammar of his own and afterwards Machiavel's *Historia Fiorentina* and *Discorsi sopra il Tito Livio* and I came to read and understand it pretty well but not to speak it at all.' (*Journal A*, p. 10.)

230. *Memoirs*, p. 126.

In the prime of his life, Gibbon could in fact have contrasted without illusion his condition on his return to Lausanne with his condition when he had arrived in Switzerland ten years before for an enforced stay. Then he had been without a servant²³² in a strange world where he could not understand the language. He was now an experienced man of the world, the author of the *Essai*, and proud of his militia experience. This time, together with several other young gentlemen of good birth doing the Grand Tour, he was staying as a "pensionnaire" in the household of Henri Crousaz, seigneur of Mézery, who had a town house on the fashionable rue du Bourg, with views to the south of the lake and of the Alps, and a château in the hilly countryside to the north-west of Lausanne. Moreover before his departure from England he had engaged a servant from Berne to accompany him throughout his travels.²³³

The change in his living arrangements at Lausanne was with

231. *Miscellanea*, p. 106. These words were written by Gibbon after his arrival in Lausanne in the summer of 1763. Recalling his reception in Paris at the time of composing his *Memoirs*, Gibbon had forgotten his pique and imagined his wish had been fulfilled: 'I was considered as a man of letters, or rather as a gentleman who wrote for his amusement: my appearance, dress and equipment distinguished me from the tribe of authors who even at Paris, are secretly envied and despised by those who possess the advantages of birth and fortune.' (*Memoirs*, p. 126.)

232. Gibbon had to wait until August 1757 before obtaining his father's silent acceptance of the extra expense of a valet. In a letter of 4th June that year, he had written to his father: 'Je vous ai souvent demandé la liberté de prendre un Domestique. Je vous le demande encore comme la douceur qui me seroit le plus sensible. Comme je sai mon Cher Pere que vous n'aimez pas beaucoup à écrire des lettres, après six Semaines ou deux mois, je regarderai votre silence comme un Consentement.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 57.) Pavillard, in a letter to Gibbon's father dated 14th January 1758, referred to the engagement of a valet and a visit to Geneva as the causes of an increase to the expense account which he defended 'puisqu'il (Gibbon) fait un bon usage de son argent et de son tems, et qu'il est dans un âge dans lequel on accorde un peu plus de liberté aux jeunes gens.' (Add. Mss. 34,887.)

233. In his *Journal* for 24th November 1762, he wrote: 'I took a new servant for my travels, George Suiss (Suess), a native of Bern. He is to [be] out of livery and to have twenty Guineas a year and half a guinea a week board wages.' (*Journal A*, p. 185.) In Paris and Genoa, Gibbon reported to his father that Suess was a very useful servant and he even considered re-engaging him in 1783 after hearing that he had married and settled in Lausanne. (*Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 135 & 179, and Vol. II, p. 336.)

Pavillard's assistance and there remained a strong bond of friendship between them. Gibbon explained the situation to his stepmother in his letter of 18th June 1763:

Pavillard and I were really glad to see one another. He shewed me his snuff box which he always carries in a wooden case for fear of spoiling it. I was at first uneasy about my lodging. I did not chuse to see the Leg of Mutton roasted a second time with a gash in it, and yet I was afraid of disoblging my old friend. Luckily he had got into a new house and had no room for me; so that he himself assisted me, in settling in a very agreeable family which I was very well acquainted with before.²³⁴

Besides the evident feeling of friendship, Pavillard would have been conscious of his contribution to the literary achievement of his former pupil²³⁵ and he continued to guide Gibbon in his studies. It will be seen that he was responsible for introducing books to him during his second stay in Lausanne which would be of lasting importance to him.

In spite of the changes in his living conditions, Gibbon, at the age of twenty-six, was still financially dependent on his father. Before his departure from England, he had negotiated an allowance that was intended to support him during an absence of two years. After incurring heavy expenses during his stay in Paris,²³⁶ he had thought of spending only two or three months in Lausanne to renew friendships and to prepare for his tour

234. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 151. Norton reveals that the snuff-box was a present from Gibbon's father to Pavillard with a miniature of Gibbon aged about 21 in the lid, painted by Penelope Carwardine. The miniature survived; Gibbon recovered it after Pavillard's death in 1775 and gave it to Lord Sheffield; it remained in the possession of Sheffield's descendants and is reproduced in Plate III of *Letters*, Vol. I, facing p. 112.

235. Gibbon wrote in the draft of his *Memoirs* known as *Memoir C*: 'Pavillard shed tears of joy in embracing a pupil whose literary merit he might fairly impute to his own labours'; and in *Memoir D*: 'virtuous Pavillard embraced with tears of joy a pupil whose success he ascribed to his own lessons'. (*The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, p. 264 and p. 404.)

236. The biggest expense reported to his father on 24th February was the hire of a coach for 16 guineas a month, as compared with the cost of an apartment consisting of an antechamber, a dining room, a bed chamber and a servant's room, at the cost of 6 guineas a month. (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 135.)

of Italy; but once engaged in the social round and in his studies, he found eleven months slipping by and he became uncertain whether he could afford to travel further. However in March 1764 he received a letter from his father which assured him of sufficient funds: the amount was not particularly generous, as he confided to his *Journal*,²³⁷ but at least he could proceed on an honest footing.

In a letter to his stepmother of 18th February 1764, Gibbon describes his life at Lausanne in a particularly playful manner:

Pleasant weather (I am forced to draw my curtains this moment to exclude the sun) study in the morning, and company in the afternoon. Books you are not perhaps acquainted with and people that I am sure you do not know make up my occupations, and notwithstanding all the pleasure I hope for in Italy I own I shall quit this place with some unwillingness.²³⁸

Such relaxation must have contributed to his reception of new ideas and new influences on his intellectual and social life.

Gibbon's mornings in Lausanne were usually spent in reading and in composing his description of Italy in ancient times as preparation for his tour. Frequent dinner parties, starting at mid-day, went into the late afternoon and were followed by promenades. Supper parties in his friends' houses included games of whist²³⁹ and sometimes amateur theatricals. Occasionally he was involved in heavy drinking bouts with his male friends, which affected his ability to study the next morning. Worse still there were disturbances in the streets, on one occasion involving Gibbon and his compatriots in a show of arms by the night watch. Gibbon contributed to a

237. 'Je continue mon Voyage sur un pied honnête sans être brillant.' (*Journal B*, p. 242.)

238. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 168.

239. A game described by Gibbon as 'si nécessaire à l'existence d'un Lausannois.' (*Journal B*, p. 177.)

spirited protest on behalf of his friends before the magistrates, who feared that the defendants would take their case to Berne. The result, luckily for the young Englishmen, was a reprimand for the watch.²⁴⁰

In the summer, the Mézerys with their guests made frequent visits to their country château, whereas in the winter months they and the other local gentry stayed in their town houses and took to a fairly intensive round of entertainment, including balls and carefully rehearsed theatrical presentations. This was a very different situation for Gibbon from the lonely nights he had spent in his lodging in London, when he had returned from his summer residence at Buriton.²⁴¹ He attended the plays and joined in the card games but usually excused himself from dancing. In his *Memoirs*, he remembers the parties where fifteen or twenty young unmarried ladies would laugh and sing, play at cards and act in comedies, amidst a crowd of young men of mixed nationalities, and remarks that the 'invisible line between liberty and licentious was never transgressed ...'²⁴² Such memories would entice Gibbon back to Lausanne when his parliamentary career drew to a close with the decline of Lord North's administration. Nevertheless, the young Gibbon in August 1763 realised that such a life was not the purpose of his visit and he admonishes himself in his *Journal*:

240. *Journal B*, p. 7 and Appendix I, pp. 273-280, where Bonnard publishes extracts from the *Registre du Conseil de Lausanne* about disturbances caused by young Englishmen and about the censured behaviour of the night-patrol. Gibbon's account of the outcome in his *Journal* for 23rd August shows singular detachment: 'J'ai fait un petit discours d'un quart d'heure pour exposer le sujet de notre plainte...affaire malheureuse, qui montre de la part du Magistrat un entêtement, une mauvaise foi et une incapacité qui le rendent tres meprisable; et de la notre trop de passion à soutenir une bagatelle.'

241. 'While coaches were rattling through Bond Street, I have passed many a solitary evening in my lodging with my books: my studies were sometimes interrupted by a sigh which I breathed towards Lausanne...' (*Memoirs*, p.94.)

242. *Ibid.*, p. 130. A rather different impression of at least one occasion is given in his *Journal*; as, for example, on 6th April 1764, when Gibbon was awakened early by Pavillard and Holroyd to assist in the prevention of a duel between his friend, Guise, and a Dutchman, who were rivals for the affection of the socially eligible Nanette de Illens. (*Journal B*, pp. 258-9.)

Les petites dissipations de la ville, le tumulte de Mesery, et les changemens journaliers de l'un à l'autre, me donnent plus de distractions à Lausanne, que je n'en ai jamais trouvées à Londres ou à Paris. Il faut se remettre au travail.²⁴³

Pavillard's residual supervisory role now showed itself. One day in November 1763, for example, when Gibbon was not feeling well, Pavillard lent him a little book, called *Lettres écrites de la Campagne*, about the current political troubles in Geneva. Although the author did not reveal his name, it was generally believed to be by the procureur général of Geneva, Jean-Robert Tronchin. Gibbon's attention was obviously intrigued by the argument of the writer, in spite of the indisposition which caused him to be bed the next day, for he comments with the political acumen already evident in his writings during his first stay in Switzerland:

Ces lettres sont d'un homme d'Esprit qui affecte un peu trop la maniere de Montesquieu. Il se declare pour le Magistrat, et regarde comme un frein salutaire, cette approbation préalable du petit conseil sans laquelle nulle affaire ne peut etre portée devant l'assemblée Generale. Il la compare à la Voix negative du Roi dans la Constitution d'Angleterre. Mais quelle difference immense entre la voix negative qui precede la deliberation, et celle qui la suit.²⁴⁴

Gibbon had already begun, possibly at the instigation of Pavillard, a more demanding plan of reading which settled him into his preparation for his tour of Italy. It included works in Latin on the topography of Rome, the geography of Italy and the study of medals. Pavillard supplied him in the middle of September 1763 with a treatise on ancient Rome by Famiano Nardini, which was borrowed from the Public Library in Geneva, now the

243. *Journal B*, p. 3. Gibbon illustrates the meaning of 'tumulte' in his entry for 20th August where he says his apartment has become the regular meeting place ('Caffé réglé') of some Englishmen spending the day at the château and complains of the noise of billiards. (*Ibid.*, p. 5.)

244. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

University Library.²⁴⁵ Making notes often amounting to critical essays in his *Journal*, Gibbon read some 290 pages of double columns in folio about the topography of classical Rome on fourteen out of sixteen days from 17th September to 2nd October. Gibbon had clearly rediscovered the purpose of his tour. His *Journal*, until he remodels it at the end of the year, when he separated from it lengthy observations and deep reflections arising from his reading,²⁴⁶ ceases to be primarily an account of his social engagements. In the month previous to 17th September, his only serious reading leading to written reflections had been Juvenal's *Satires*. The change of mood is shown in his resisting the opportunity of another excursion into the Swiss cantons; this time it would have been in the lively company of his contemporaries, Holroyd, Guise, Manners and Clarke.²⁴⁷ Four days after their departure, he concludes his reading of Nardini with this self-assessment:

Je suis très content de moi vis-à-vis de cet auteur, je l'ai lû ce traité dans seize jours; et cependant je l'ai fort bien lû, d'une façon très attentive et très réfléchie.²⁴⁸

Arguably this was a development which shows dawning recognition, while in Lausanne, of where his future interests would lie. As mentioned in

245. The treatise was included in the *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum* of J.-G. Graevius, 1632-1703, published in twelve volumes from 1694 to 1699 at Utrecht and Leyden. It was the first edition which is still in the University Library in Geneva. Gibbon read from the fourth volume Famiano Nardini's *Roma Vetus*, translated by Jacobus Tollius into Latin from the original Italian. Nardini's *Roma Antica*, published separately at Rome in 1704, was in Gibbon's library at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne and is frequently quoted in *The Decline and Fall*; there are five references to the work in the last chapter alone.

246. *Journal B*, pp. 191-2.

247. Gibbon reveals that they had pressed him to go with them. (*Journal B*, p. 65.) Gibbon feared that Manners and Clarke would have reduced the party to a rout: 'il[s] feront du tapage partout, depenseront beaucoup et reviendront sans avoir rien vu.' Gibbon's other reasons for not going were the late time of year and their intention to travel on horseback. (With the Pavillards, eight years previously, he had travelled at the same time of year but had a carriage.) Manners was the natural son of the third Duke of Rutland; like Holroyd, he was an officer in the regular army and used to tease Gibbon about the militia. Clarke had taken a leading role in the confrontation with the night watch and is described by Gibbon shortly before his departure from Lausanne as having 'une étourderie d'enfant.' (*Ibid.*, p. 259.)

248. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

the previous chapter,²⁴⁹ Georges Bonnard believed that Gibbon's reading for his Italian tour from September 1763 until his departure from Lausanne in the following April manifested his interest in Rome and turned him into more of a historian than a man of letters. However, on the one hand, his studies were topographical and geographical as well as historical; on the other, he had already recognised what his future career might be. He had glimpsed the role of a philosophical historian for himself in the composition of his *Essai*, as shown in Chapter 4, and in the winter of 1758/9 he had read the four volumes of Hume's *History of England* covering the Tudors and Stuarts and Robertson's *History of Scotland during the Reign of Queen Mary and of King James VI* at the time of their publication. Moreover, during his militia service he had reflected on a list of historical subjects which he would wish to research.²⁵⁰ Relying upon extracts from his *Journal* written during his militia service, Gibbon demonstrates in his *Memoirs* that he had 'aspired to the character of an historian' before the publication of his *Essai* in 1761.²⁵¹ In Lausanne in September 1763, he was in effect beginning to concentrate on some of the major secondary sources for his future history of Rome, works which would be forever associated in his mind with Lausanne. They were intended, however, in the first place, to allow him to visualise clearly in his imagination the topography of Rome, so that in the following year, when he arrived in Rome and walked among the ruins of the Forum, 'each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell was at once present to [his] eye.'²⁵²

249. See pp. 78-9 above.

250. The subjects were the expedition of Charles VIII of France into Italy, the crusade of Richard I, the barons' war against John, the history of the Black Prince, the lives and comparisons of Titus and Henry V, and the lives of Sir Philip Sidney, of the Marquis of Montrose and, finally, of Sir Walter Raleigh.

251. pp. 119-22.

252. *Memoirs*, p. 134.

Even so, at the time of reading Nardini, Gibbon was undergoing emotional strain of an intensity that surprised him and caused him to put the book aside for two days. There were two reasons for this hiatus. Firstly, on 21st September, he received 'une petite mortification' in that he had not been elected 'Directeur des Etrangers' at the Cercle,²⁵³ a disappointment which might have been caused by his involvement with disturbances such as the one which had led to his appearance before the magistrates in the previous month. The matter is still preying on his conscience four days later, when he visits Mme de Bochat after an absence of eleven days. Her discreet silence about recent events worries him:

J'avois une très belle reputation ici pour les mœurs, mais je vois qu'on commence à me confondre avec mes Compatriotes, et à me regarder comme un homme qui aime le vin et le desordre. Ont-ils tout à fait tort?²⁵⁴

Secondly, on 22nd September, he received a letter of self-justification from Suzanne Curchod which makes him exclaim in his *Journal*: 'Fille dangereuse et artificielle!' How could her letter express so much candour and sentiment about their broken romance after all that he had heard of her social successes in Lausanne during his absence? The lesson that he draws from this unfortunate affair is dire indeed: 'Elle m'a ouvert les yeux sur le caractère des femmes -, et elle me servira longtems de preservatif contre les seductions de l'amour.'²⁵⁵

Despite such distractions and the temptation there might have been to travel in the Swiss cantons with his young compatriots, Gibbon is involved deeply with his study of Nardini. He sees him as one of the 'Critiques

²⁵³. *Journal B*, p. 50. A club founded in 1761 which met at No. 29, rue du Bourg, in the house of Loya de Cheseaux.

²⁵⁴. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁵⁵. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

modernes'²⁵⁶ whose exactitude is much superior to previous writers.

Nardini describes the fourteen regions of the city of Rome in the time of Augustus and his research succeeds in establishing the location of most of the monuments. After reading Nardini, Gibbon has the pleasure of understanding 'beaucoup mieux mon Juvenal.' But Gibbon wishes that Nardini had reflected further about the habitations of Rome, concerning whether they were detached or not, as indicated in the use of the words *insula* and *domus*, rather than piling up conflicting citations, and he gives his own reflections on the difference in meaning of the words and the social significance. He has his own way of calculating the population of Rome which produces a figure between that of Nardini and of his editor, Graevius.²⁵⁷ Ten days later Gibbon supports his own estimate with further calculations derived from the size of the Circus Maximus. Sometimes, having weighed in his mind various problems of topography raised by Nardini, Gibbon feels his own understanding has become clearer than the author's and he expresses this idea in his criticism:

Je lui reprocherois aussi de trouver trop de difficultés, et d'employer des pages entières à expliquer ce qu'une seule observation juste et precise éclairciroit d'abord.²⁵⁸

Gibbon is practising what he has identified as the distinctive qualities of

256. *Journal B*, p. 47. Already in 1763 Gibbon was aware that the Latin version which he was reading was considered to be of less worth than the Italian original (see footnote 245 above) and refers in his *Journal*, p. 42, to the Abbé Lenglet de Fresnoy as his authority (*Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, avec un catalogue des principaux Historiens, & des Remarques sur la bonté de leurs Ouvrages, & sur le choix des meilleures Editions*, Paris, 1735). According to Keynes, Gibbon had the fifteen volumes of the Paris edition of 1772 of Lenglet du Fresnoy's work in Bentinck Street and at Lausanne. In Add. Mss. 34,877 Gibbon misspells Lenglet, writing 'Langlet'.

257. Nardini is quoted as the authority for estimating the number of houses in Rome in Gibbon's review of the city before the siege of Alaric in Chapter XXXI of *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. III, p. 325.

258. *Journal B*, p. 73.

'l'esprit philosophique' in his *Essai*,²⁵⁹ searching for the simple truth from a mass of separate facts and events. Here can be seen the critical mind of the young historian consulting one of the most 'recent but imperfect'²⁶⁰ authorities on a subject which will eventually become the major work of his life.

Gibbon spent a week reading further studies on classical Rome in the fourth volume of Graevius,²⁶¹ and then began 'une enterprise considerable', another major work in Latin, on the geography of ancient Italy. It was by Philip Cluvier in two volumes in folio, published at Leyden in 1624.²⁶² Gibbon was to describe him in the *Memoirs* as 'a learned native of Prussia who had measured on foot every spot, and has compiled and digested every passage of the ancient writers.'²⁶³ He was inspired by the detail and extent of Cluvier's work and considered his reading of him and Nardini as a preparation not only for his journey to Italy but also for his future studies.²⁶⁴ The book is full of quotations and to read it is a 'tache vraiment

259. For example, 'L'esprit philosophique consiste à pouvoir remonter aux idées simples; à saisir et à combiner les premiers principes.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 58.) In his *Journal*, Gibbon expresses admiration for the philosophical talents of Juvenal in similar terms: 'La brieveté, l'art d'enchaîner ses idées et sa précision', and compares his brevity with that of Tacitus and Montesquieu, 'qui sait retrancher tout ce qui n'est qu'accessoire pour renfermer l'idée principale dans une expression forte et précise.' (*Journal B*, pp. 32-3.)

260. Gibbon's verdict on Nardini in footnote 85 of Chapter LXXI of *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. VII, p.337. As Low noted in his *Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, p.184, Nardini was the cause of Gibbon giving the wrong dedication of Jupiter rather than of Juno to the temple and subsequent church on the Capitoline Hill, where he later claimed to have first conceived the idea of writing the history of the decline of the city while the barefooted friars were singing vespers. (*Memoirs*, p. 136.) The origin of the mistake can be seen in the discussion of Nardini's text on pp. 59-61 of *Journal B*.

261. As late as 22nd October, when he had to send the book back to the Geneva Public Library, Gibbon went through Nardini's account again trying to make sure that he had retained its principal ideas: 'L'infirmité humaine en laisse toujours échapper une partie, mais je vois avec plaisir qu'il m'en reste et qu'il m'en restera beaucoup.' (*Journal B*, p. 101.)

262. The catalogue in *Keynes* shows these volumes were later in Gibbon's library at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne.

263. p. 132. Cluvier was born in Danzig in 1580 and died in Leyden in 1623.

264. *Journal B*, p.90. Cluvier remained in Gibbon's mind, for example, when he wished to describe the Straits of Messina at the time of the death of Alaric. (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. III, p. 351, where Cluvier is praised as one 'who had diligently studied the ancients and surveyed with a curious eye the actual face of the country'.)

laborieuse!’²⁶⁵ Cluvier’s method is confused but everywhere he quotes his sources, he examines them, he compares them, and, in doing so, he reveals many errors in the works of commentators and historians such as Servius and Appianus. Even Ptolemy, Strabo and Pliny the Elder are found to be fallible. Gibbon thinks Cluvier is too willing to believe that copyists have made the mistakes and too ready to suggest amendments to the surviving texts. Gibbon’s experience in literary and historical criticism, acquired and tested in his correspondence with continental scholars during his first residence in Lausanne, is displayed in comments such as: ‘Le nombre de ces corrections me paroissent inutiles et hazardées, mais il y en a très heureuses.’²⁶⁶ He completed reading the 1338 pages of Cluvier’s magnum opus on 3rd December, making entries about it in his *Journal* on thirty-eight of the fifty-two days from 13th October to 3rd December.²⁶⁷

A third major work in Latin which he read and took notes on during the months of February, March and April, 1764, was on the subject of ancient coins. Having noted the importance of coins and medals as evidence of artistic decline in the centuries after the reign of Augustus when he visited the Cabinet du Roi in Paris,²⁶⁸ Gibbon was moved to read in February 1764 Addison’s *Dialogues upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals Especially in relation to the Latin and Greek Poets*, which he found in the

265. *Journal B*, p. 163. Compare footnote 58 above for Gibbon’s use of the word ‘laborious’.

266. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

267. Gibbon was to have a joke at Cluvier’s expense when writing about the religion of ancient Germany in Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall*. Footnote 64 reads: ‘Tacitus has employed a few lines, and Cluverius one hundred and twenty-four pages, on this obscure subject. The former discovers in Germany the gods of Greece and Rome. The latter is positive that, under the emblems of the sun, the moon, and the fire, his pious ancestors worshipped the Trinity in unity.’ (Vol. I, p. 247.)

268. ‘J’eus le plaisir ou si l’on veut le chagrin de suivre la decadence des beaux arts depuis les Siecle[s] d’Alexandre, et d’Auguste où la plus petite monnoye de cuivre est d’une gravure exquise jusqu’aux tems ténébreux du bas-empire, dont les medailles laissent entrevoir à peine les traces de la figure humaine. J’ai regret d’être si neuf dans cette belle science.’ (*Miscellanea*, p. 98.)

third volume of the London 1746 edition of his collected works. He had a great regard for Addison's writings on medals and Italy²⁶⁹ and it was a comment in Addison's *Remarks on several parts of Italy* which he had recalled as early as 1755 when noting a medal of the Emperor Tiberius in the library of the Abbey of St. Urban.²⁷⁰ It was Addison who now led Gibbon into the more weighty work of an expert.

Ezechiel Spanheim was born in Geneva in 1629, the son of a Bavarian professor of theology; he showed early proficiency as a linguist, becoming Professor of Eloquence in the Academy of Geneva in 1651. His portrait is given a prominent position close to Jacques Necker's in the museum of the Geneva University Library. Later he travelled in Italy as the tutor of the son of the Elector Palatine, becoming expert in numismatic and antiquarian studies. He mixed diplomacy with academic interests and eventually became the ambassador of the King of Prussia in London. He died there in 1710, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

His *Dissertatio de Praestantia et Usu Numismatum Antiquorum* was the main source of information for Gibbon on the historical evidence of coins and medals when he came to write *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and marks the culmination of his reading on that subject. It was therefore the third influential work that Gibbon became familiar with

269. 'Ses ouvrages ont beaucoup contribué à former la langue et la littérature (sic) Anglaise', *Journal B*, p. 212. His regard for Addison, at this time, did not prevent him later from including Addison among 'the herd of bigots' who had supported the authenticity of the legend of the Edessa portrait of Christ on linen: 'his superficial tract on Christian religion owes its credit to his name, his style, and the interested applause of our clergy.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 264, footnote 9.) Gibbon was to acquire a 1771 edition of Addison's *De la religion chrétienne*, translated by G. S. de Correvon, and published in Geneva in three volumes. (Keynes, p. 45.)

270. See pp. 26-7 above.

during his second stay in Lausanne. He used the second edition in two volumes in quarto which had appeared in Amsterdam in 1671.²⁷¹ On completing his reading of it, he judged it to be 'un vrai tresor d'Erudition Metallique'.²⁷² When referring to Spanheim in *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon gives him without irony the epithet 'learned'²⁷³ and quotes him generally as his main authority on ancient coins. When he discusses in Chapter XIII the disappearance of the titles of consul, proconsul, censor and tribune in Diocletian's time, Gibbon refers to 'Spanheim's excellent work':

From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.²⁷⁴

There are daily entries about reading Spanheim in his *Journal* but, in his study of this work, there are gaps of more than a week and of nearly four weeks when he laid the volumes aside for his own composition of a description of Italy. He read the 914 pages of Spanheim's work in twenty one days from 12th February to 12th April 1764. Clearly, it was in Lausanne that Gibbon laid the foundation of his knowledge of ancient medals and coins.

With these works in mind, Gibbon modestly wrote in his *Memoirs* of his preparation for his visit to Italy:

I was not ignorant of the science of medals and manuscripts, I had accurately surveyed the Geography of Italy, and the Topography of ancient Rome.²⁷⁵

271. Gibbon was aware that there was a better later edition published in London which he had arranged to be sent from Geneva. (*Journal B*, p. 213), but his *Journal* shows that he relied on the 1671 edition. The two volumes of the later edition which appeared in 1707 and 1717 in London and Amsterdam were in Gibbon's Library at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne after 1783 (Keynes, p. 254).

272. *Journal B*, p. 261.

273. For example: 'The Orbis Romanus of the learned Spanheim is a complete history of the progressive admission of Latium, Italy, and the provinces to the freedom of Rome.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 36, footnote 22.)

274. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 410, footnote 102.

275. *Memoir D, The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, p. 405.

Besides these historical sources, however, Gibbon was reading more generally, especially books of contemporary European interest. For example, his *Journal* for August 1763 to April 1764 contains entries on the letters of Baron de Bielfeld²⁷⁶ about the courts of Germany which interest him especially for their account of Frederick the Great. One evening in February he reads Voltaire's fable in verse, *Ce qui plaît aux Dames*, recognising its derivation from Pope and commenting, with the detachment characteristic of his references to Voltaire from this time onwards, that 'les vers n'ont point cette legereté et ce naturel, qui est si essentiel.'²⁷⁷ The following month, Gibbon gets up at eleven o'clock, after spending the previous evening at a ball, and reads Voltaire's *Traité sur la tolérance à l'occasion de la mort de Jean Calas*. He appreciates Voltaire's aim to arouse a sense of humanity in his readers and to show the dreadful results of intolerance ('le but ne peut qu'être louable'), and delights in his ironic reduction of ancient history to fable and conjecture, but his historical judgement causes him to criticise Voltaire for dismissing all reliability in the accounts of Tiberius by Tacitus and Suetonius.²⁷⁸ He reads Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les Spectacles*, commenting that the arguments of Plato against imitative poetry and against the theatre must please the Citizen of

276. His *Lettres Familières*, published in two volumes at The Hague in 1763, were dedicated to Voltaire.

277. *Journal B*, p. 218. The fable was published in 1764 but was made available to friends of Voltaire in December 1763. Gibbon's critical view of Voltaire's manner and style can also be seen in his report to his stepmother of the performance of *L'Orphelin de la Chine* at Farnham in the summer of 1763: 'Voltaire himself acted *Gengis* and Madame Denys *Idamé*; but I do not know how it happened: either my taste is improved or Voltaire's talents are impaired since I last saw him: He appeared to me now a very ranting unnatural performer. Perhaps indeed As I was come from Paris, I rather judged him by an unfair comparaison, than by his own independent value.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 155.)

278. *Journal B*, p. 240.

Geneva, but he is not impressed by Rousseau's treatment of either subject.²⁷⁹ The *Letters* of Mary Wortley Montagu arouse more enthusiasm in him; they are light, amusing, informative and cause him to reflect on how little the Greeks have changed since the time of Homer. Published in London in 1763, the *Letters* are the only book which Gibbon chooses to comment on in the letter to his stepmother dated 18th February 1764.²⁸⁰ He was very entertained by the author. 'What fire, what ease, what knowledge of Europe and Asia.'

With the exception of Lady Mary Wortley Montague's *Letters*, these were books which Gibbon possessed in later life.²⁸¹ Also in his library subsequently was the quarterly literary review, published in Amsterdam from 1728 to 1753, called *La Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savans de l'Europe*, which Gibbon went through systematically during his second stay in Switzerland finishing the fiftieth and final volume on 21st March 1764. It contained full accounts and criticisms of new works, helping to keep Gibbon abreast of relatively recent historical research.²⁸² One of the reviews amounted to a vindication of Calvin's conduct in the prosecution of Servetus. Gibbon's comments are clear and certain, aligning him with the humanity of Voltaire:

279. 'Toute la première partie qui roule sur le peu de justesse de l'imitation est d'une fausseté et d'une foiblesse qui m'a étonné. Vers la fin ses raisonnemens deviennent un peu plus specieux. Je conviens que le théâtre et surtout le théâtre d'Athènes a quelquefois peint ses heros trop foibles et trop sensibles à leurs malheurs; mais aussi il faut accorder quelque chose à l'humanité qui gemit en secret, ou qui depose ses ennuis dans le sein d'un ami. Les spectateurs sont les confidens du poete mais ils ne le sont pas du personnage.' (*Journal B*, p. 209.)

280. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 169.

281. For example, Gibbon acquired the Geneva editions of the complete works of Voltaire and Rousseau during his third residence in Lausanne. (*Keynes*.)

282. A recent work from which a large abstract was printed in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* was Dalin's *History of Sweden* published in Stockholm in 1747. In his *Journal* for 13th February 1764 Gibbon writes about how new a country Sweden is, two thousand years ago being only an archipelago of islands before the level of the sea gradually sunk at the rate of half an inch a year. (*Journal B*, pp. 214-5.) The same remarks occur, together with a reference to Dalin and the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* in footnote 3 to Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 231.

Jamais les principes et les actions des hommes ne sont plus différentes que lorsque les principes sont opposés aux sentiments naturels de l'humanité. Le Cœur corrige les erreurs de l'Esprit.²⁸³

His thoughts move from the Geneva of Calvin to the Rome of Brutus, the father of the republic who sacrificed his sons to save the liberty of Rome, and the subject of Voltaire's tragedy. If he had sentenced them to death without any emotion of grief, then, Gibbon argues, his conduct would not have been heroic. Returning to Calvin, he sees no pity in his treatment of Servetus, only 'une dureté affreuse.' He concludes that Voltaire was right when he said 'Calvin avoit l'ame atroce et l'Esprit éclairé.'²⁸⁴

The account of his reading and the reflections that followed naturally and eloquently in the privacy of his *Journal* are not in the least like the writings of a traveller divorced from his main sources of information and responding to accidental circumstances. On the contrary, they represent the interests and reactions of someone in direct contact with the views of the philosophes and the material which would enable him to achieve his future major work. The experience of living in Switzerland for a second time would have helped to convince Gibbon that he would have access to the sources that he would need to continue with the second half of *The Decline and Fall*, nearly twenty years later when he was deciding to take up permanent residence in Lausanne in 1783.

Gibbon's main composition, apart from his *Journal*, during his second stay in Lausanne was his description of Italy in ancient times which was published in *The Miscellaneous Works* under the title of *Nomina, gentesque*

283. *Journal B*, pp. 131.

284. In the *Letter on the Government of Berne*, Gibbon had been as critical of Calvin, referring to him ironically as 'théologien atrabilaire, qui aimoit trop la liberté, pour souffrir que les Chrétiens portassent d'autres fers que les siens.' (*Miscellanea*, pp. 133-4.)

antiquae Italiae.²⁸⁵ This work is described by Gibbon in a letter to his stepmother of 6th August 1763. He tells her that he would like to stay in Lausanne over the winter because he is engaged in a considerable work

Which will be a most usefull [sic] preparation to my tour of Italy which I shall not be able to finish sooner. It is a description of the ancient Geography of Italy, taken from the Original writers. If I go into Italy with a work of that kind tolerably executed, I shall carry every where about with me an accurate and lively idea of the Country, and shall have nothing to do but to insert in their proper places my own observations as they tend either to confirm, to confute or to illustrate what I have met with in books.²⁸⁶

Gibbon started this work as soon as he arrived in Lausanne. In his review of the year 1763 in his *Journal* he says his ardour for it was well sustained for six weeks until the end of June before social distractions at Mézery and Lausanne and a visit to Geneva interrupted progress.²⁸⁷ There are intermittent references in the *Journal* to writing a page or two of it a day during August to October 1763 and then there is a gap. In reviewing past work on it at the beginning of February 1764, Gibbon could write that he had composed much of his description. Nevertheless, there is further work to do on it during the months preceding his departure. On the 17th of March, Gibbon gives an account of going up to the library of the Academy of Lausanne²⁸⁸ to read the researches of Freret on the history of the early peoples of Italy in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* before writing about them on the following day.²⁸⁹ Finally on the

285. *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 153-326.

286. *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 153-4.

287. *Journal B*, p. 189. It was on his visit to Geneva that he had visited Ferney to see Voltaire perform in his play, *L'Orphelin de la Chine*. (See footnote 277 above.)

288. He would have had to proceed by the steep streets across the ravine of the river Flon which passed between the Bourg and the Cité. There are several references in his *Journal* to visiting the library. Although Gibbon calls it a public library, he was a privileged member of it because Pavillard had given him a key, so that he could consult books with reference to his future tour of Italy. He was particularly intrigued by M. de la Condamine's journal of a tour of Italy, in which he had calculated the height of mountains in the Alps by barometrical observations. (*Journal B*, pp. 97-8, 251-3 & 255-6.)

289. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

29th of March, he reports in his *Journal* that he has collected in ninety-two pages a rich fund of information which his future reading and tour of Italy will enable him to arrange into a complete description.²⁹⁰

The manuscript pages, which still exist in the British Museum,²⁹¹ show clearly that Gibbon's account of ancient Italy was very different from the orderly description first published by Lord Sheffield in 1814.²⁹² As Craddock has explained in her *Young Edward Gibbon*, the account was written in the form of a common-place book²⁹³ and, heroic as Lord Sheffield's efforts were to create order out of apparent confusion, the published version gives a very different impression from Gibbon's original method of composition. This involved providing two pages for each section or chapter subject; if he completed the second page, Gibbon would allocate two more pages further on, giving them a new chapter number; otherwise pages remained unfilled. This is apparent in his remark in the letter to his stepmother about subsequently inserting 'in their proper places' his observations when visiting the places described. An example of such an insertion after starting his journey occurs at the end of the section on Rome where, with a finer pen than he has used previously, Gibbon describes a manuscript of the texts of the elder Pliny's *Natural History* and the younger Pliny's *Letters* which he had seen and examined carefully for textual differences in the library of the Marquis Riccardi in Florence.²⁹⁴

The factual account of regions and places is remarkable for the wide

290. *Journal B*, p. 249.

291. Add. Mss. 34,881.

292. *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 153-326.

293. Craddock discusses Gibbon's method in detail in *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-6.

294. Add. Mss. 34,881 and *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 224-5.

range of sources cited by Gibbon, in addition to Cluvier and Nardini, as much as for insights revealing his philosophical outlook or the influence of Switzerland upon him. There is a suggestion of local knowledge when he asserts the outstanding importance of the Alps in Italy's history: 'Il y a telles montagnes dont on n'atteint le sommet qu'après une marche de cinq jours.'²⁹⁵ The most detailed section is on Rome²⁹⁶ where Gibbon, like an expectant sightseer, notes the topographical attractions as listed by Strabo, by the elder Pliny, and by the Emperor Constantius on his visit of AD 356, as reported by Ammianus Marcellinus. Gibbon's account of this imperial visit in Chapter XIX of *The Decline and Fall* was to include the same attractions from the same source, noting on both occasions that it was the forum of Trajan, and in particular a colossal equestrian statue of that emperor, which especially took his attention. In *The Decline and Fall*, a note of personal reminiscence is added to the account of the visit of Constantius.²⁹⁷

When Gibbon was in Paris on his way to Lausanne, he had been drawn to the character and learning of the Abbé Barthélémy and he adds his observations on Rome to the attractions listed by the authors of antiquity. The Abbé Barthélémy had been a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres since 1747 and had arranged for Gibbon to visit the Cabinet du Roi. On 27th December 1763 at Lausanne, Gibbon read in the *Mémoires* of the Académie Barthélémy's *Mémoire sur les anciens monumens de Rome*. Gibbon comments that it was 'plein de gout,

²⁹⁵ *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 171.

²⁹⁶ Sect. VII. Urbs Roma. (*Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 206-25.)

²⁹⁷ 'The traveller, who has contemplated the ruins of ancient Rome, may conceive some imperfect idea of the sentiments which they must have inspired when they reared their heads in the splendour of unsullied beauty.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. II, p. 277.)

d'érudition et de bon sens, digne de ce savant aimable que j'ai beaucoup connu à Paris.'²⁹⁸

Gibbon's piecemeal method of composition and division of subjects does not provide for chronological order, but he manages to outline in the section on Rome the evolution of the city from the time of the first kings, when he pictures it 'plutôt à un camp de Tartares, qu'à une ville Européenne,'²⁹⁹ to the golden age which he subsequently pictured in the second chapter of *The Decline and Fall*.

Depuis Vespasien jusqu'à Marc Aurèle, tous les empereurs se sont piqués de contribuer à l'embellissement de Rome, et si la décadence des arts empêcha Sévère, Alexandre, Aurélien, et Dioclétien d'y mettre autant de goût, ils tâchèrent au moins d'y suppléer, par la magnificence.³⁰⁰

Such a general observation, rare in this work, already gives the tone of the mature historian, balancing his sense of a decline of taste under the Empire with recognition of continuing material progress. In the next sentence, he goes on to consider the cause of the decline of the buildings of Rome, and his views are similar to those of the philosophical historian in the final chapter of *The Decline and Fall*.

La fondation de Constantinople affoiblit Rome, les barbares y firent quelque dégât, mais c'est au zèle des papes, qui ruinèrent les temples, et à la misère des siècles suivans, qu'il faut attribuer la ruine de la plupart des édifices de l'ancienne Rome. Grégoire le Grand et le laps du tems y ont fait plus de mal qu'Atila.³⁰¹

298. *Journal B*, p. 186. Gibbon goes on to mention that he had attended the re-opening of the Académie after the Easter vacation in April 1763, when Barthélémy had given a discourse on the Coptic language. It did not seem a suitable subject for the assembly but 'On vit avec un plaisir mêlé de surprise combien notre Abbé le rendoit intéressant aux femmes et aux gens du monde qui l'écoutoient par les grâces de son style, par la finesse de sa Critique et par ses principes justes et lumineux.' The catalogue of Keynes shows that Gibbon collected the first forty-three volumes of the *Mémoires de littérature* of the Académie, published from 1736 to 1786.

299. *Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 220

300. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

301. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

Gibbon was influenced in these ideas by reading, on 6th October 1763, a dissertation *De Privatorum Publicorumque Aedificiorum Urbis Romæ Eversoribus* by Petrus Angelius Bargæus in the fourth volume of the *Thesaurus* of Grævius which contained Nardini's work. Gibbon scrupulously refers to his *Journal* for that date when writing the section on Rome in his survey of ancient Italy. His *Journal* contains more philosophical statements about the greater responsibility of the Papacy for the destruction of Rome than the leaders of the barbarian invaders, such as:

Le zèle des papes et surtout de Gregoire le Grand ne voyoit dans un temple que l'idole a laquelle il etoit consacré. Il etablissoit la religion, sur la ruine des beaux arts.³⁰²

With regard to the invaders, he asserts 'Le Soldat etoit quelquefois cruel, mais le General etoit rarement barbare et le Legislatteur ne l'etoit jamais.' The emphasis changes over time and at the end of *The Decline and Fall*, in the paragraph where he refers to his *History* as having described the triumph of barbarism and religion,³⁰³ he actually gives greater weight to the devastation of civil wars in medieval Rome than the policy of the papacy.³⁰⁴ By then, the evidence of Petrarch had persuaded him of this 'last and most potent and forcible cause of destruction,'³⁰⁵ yet the causation of decline can be seen to be already exercising his philosophical mind, even in a travel guide intended, in the first place, for his own use.

302. *Journal B*, p. 83.

303. Vol. VII, p.321.

304. The paragraph in question exonerates both the barbarians and the Christians from fanciful charges of excessive damage to the fabric of Rome, concluding with the remarks: 'Of the Christian hierarchy, the bishops of Rome were commonly the most prudent and least fanatic; nor can any positive charge be opposed to the meritorious act of saving and converting the majestic structure of the Pantheon.' (*Ibid.*, p. 322.)

305. *Ibid.*, p.326. Gibbon translates Petrarch to confirm his opinion: 'Behold,...the relics of Rome, the image of her pristine greatness! neither time nor the barbarian can boast the merit of this stupendous destruction; it was perpetrated by her own citizens, by the most illustrious of her sons; and your ancestors (he writes to a noble Annibaldi) have done with the battering-ram, what the Punic hero could not accomplish with the sword.' (*Ibid.*, p. 329.)

Though publication of a description of Italy in ancient times was part of Gibbon's intention when compiling his notes, he was aware that further observation and reflection would be needed for a worthwhile composition. In the letter of 6th August 1763 to his stepmother describing his composition, he went on to speculate:

I should not even despair, but that this mixture of study and observation properly digested upon my return to England, might produce something not entirely unworthy the eye of the publick, on a subject, upon which we have no regular or compleat treatise.³⁰⁶

There is a time in Lausanne in the December following, when he daydreams of publishing a philosophical guide for travellers to Italy:

Il pourroit enrichir un libraire, passer à la dixieme Edition et devenir un livre Classique pour les Colleges, les voyageurs et meme pour les gens de lettres.³⁰⁷

As late as June 1764, Gibbon is still thinking of publication when he writes from Florence to his stepmother:

I have never lost sight of the undertaking I laid the foundations of at Lausanne, and I do not despair of being able one day to produce something by way of a Description of ancient Italy which may be of some use to the publick and of some credit to myself.³⁰⁸

By the time Gibbon wrote his *Memoirs*, there is no trace of any lingering regret about this apparently unfulfilled ambition; there is only a reference to the common-place book 'with my collections and remarks on the Geography of Italy.'³⁰⁹ It would seem from the effort that was required for Sheffield to produce a meaningful account of Gibbon's notes for the

306. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 154.

307. *Journal B*, p. 169.

308. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 181.

309. *Memoirs*, p. 132.

second edition of the *Miscellaneous Works*³¹⁰ that Gibbon had rightly dismissed the idea of publication. Another interpretation, however, arises from examining Gibbon's original enthusiasm for his work in his *Journal*. In his entry for 7th December, he imagines how much he could improve on Cluvier's volumes on ancient Italy. More could be written about the division of the provinces of Augustus, the great roads of Italy and the topography of Rome, using the more accurate information of later scholars and recent research on the monuments of the Etruscans and of Herculaneum. Latin is no longer the language of belles-lettres.

Le public verroit avec plaisir, qu'au lieu de cette chaine de citations, un bon Ecrivain fonde ensemble toutes ses autorités, pour en former une narration claire, methodique et interresante.³¹¹

Gibbon would confine his quotations to the poets because expression is their principal merit.³¹² In his geographical description, order and clarity would be his aim but he would cast a philosophical eye over the customs of the peoples. Rome would be at the centre of his observations.

Je me placerois sur le mont Palatin avec Romulus, et commençant par le berceau de la nation, et le premier pomœrium de la ville j'en parcourrais les quartiers différens.³¹³

Such imaginings one winter evening in Lausanne were not looking forward only to a travel book that would be useful for 'les gens de lettres' but to a history of Rome which would explore the evolution of its conquests with a philosophical eye. The time scale was to shift and Gibbon would

310. Sheffield had not attempted an edition of the description of Italy when he first published the *Miscellaneous Works* in 1796. Craddock in *Young Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, p. 340, refers to an interleaved copy in the Beinecke Library at Yale of the 1796 edition used by Sheffield and his assistants in preparing the 1814 edition.

311. *Journal B*, p. 168.

312. In his *Journal* for 19th December 1763 Gibbon wrote 'La poesie a son langage particulier. Il ne convient qu'aux grands mouvemens de l'ame.' (*Ibid.*, p. 180.)

313. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.

realise more could be learnt from considering the causes of Rome's decay rather than its topography, but it is not difficult to see that his ambition was transformed over time rather than unfulfilled. By the time he wrote his *Memoirs*, Gibbon might well have felt that he had in fact realised his dream of describing the provinces of the Roman Empire under Augustus, including their customs, produce, population and roads. They were the subjects, transferred to the age of the Antonines, of the opening three chapters of *The Decline and Fall*; and in the final chapter, he had used the vision and language of Petrarch to describe the causes of Rome's decay. In particular, he had perhaps remembered the vision of sitting with Romulus on the Palatine when, with more reality, he dramatically summoned Poggius with a friend to review the decline of Rome from the commanding height of the Capitoline Hill.³¹⁴

There is much from the contemporary evidence of his *Journal* and his letters, therefore, to support Gibbon's contention in his *Memoirs* that he was already aspiring to the character of a historian before his tour of Italy. He does not cease to be a man of letters devoted to classical verse and textual criticism and he reads with pleasure and with care the *Satires* of Juvenal, surprisingly for the first time, while waiting for the treatise of Nardini from the Geneva Public Library. His knowledge of classical authors, including philosophers, historians, dramatists and poets, and his frequent reference to them were to be one of the enriching ingredients of his major

314. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VII, p. 313. As J. A. W. Bennett has commented in his *Essays on Gibbon*, Cambridge, 1980, 'The topographical project was subsumed in the larger work but he ever kept in his mind's eye, and so in his reader's, the settings of the events he describes.' (pp. 55-6.)

historical work, as they had been in his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*.³¹⁵

The pervasive influence of classical poetry can be seen in the parallel that Gibbon draws in Chapter XV of *The Decline and Fall* when he compares the fraud and sophistry of early Christian writers in citing instances of divine revelation with 'the injudicious conduct of those poets who load their invulnerable heroes with a useless weight of cumbersome and brittle armour.'³¹⁶

Yet his reading in Lausanne as shown in his *Journal* and summarised in his *Memoirs* was weighted heavily towards increasing his knowledge of Italy. Besides the major studies of Nardini, Cluvier and Spanheim, he recalls having read in Lausanne the descriptions of Italy in classical times by Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Pomponius Mela, and the "Catalogues" of Virgil and Silius Italicus, referring to the way in which, in the manner of Homer, the poets listed the names of heroes and their armies and allies in epic accounts of battles.³¹⁷ As a traveller, pursuing his interest in ancient geography, he also read the *Itineraries* of Wesseling,³¹⁸ the voyage of Rutilius Numatianus,³¹⁹ the *Mesures Itinéraires* of d'Anville and Bergier's

315. Womersley in his *The Transformation of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 167-8, notes the influence of Virgil's phrase 'incertum qua pulsa manu' relating to the wounding of Aeneas (*Aeneid*, XII, 318-20.) on Gibbon's account of the death of the Emperor Gallienus by means of a mortal dart 'from an uncertain hand.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 305.)

316. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II, p.74.

317. Gibbon wrote two notes on this subject on 23rd and 24th December 1763 to form the start of a new collection of "observations", separate from his *Journal*, which were first published by Sheffield in the 1796 edition of *The Miscellaneous Works* in the original French and then translated by him into English in the 1814 edition. (Vol. IV, pp. 327-35.) In Add. Mss. 34,800, they appear as numbered essays under the title: 'Recueil de mes observations et pieces detachées sur differens sujets.'

318. On 26th August 1763, Gibbon read a review of Wesseling's *Itineraria* by Barbeyrac in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* and noted it as one of the most useful works on the geography of the Roman Empire. (*Journal B*, p.11.) He had a copy of the Amsterdam 1735 edition at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne. (*Keynes*.)

319. An account in verse by a Gaul of his journey home in AD 416 after being a Consul, Praetorian Prefect and Governor of Rome. Gibbon found the incomplete text of seven hundred lines in the second volume of *Poetae Latini Minores*, edited by Peter Burman and published at Leyden in 1731. (*Journal B*, p. 177.)

Histoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain, from which he 'formed a table of roads and distances reduced to our English measure'.³²⁰ D'Anville, Bergier and Wesseling were to be three of Gibbon's main authorities among modern geographers for describing the extent of, and localities within, the Roman Empire. Of the three, d'Anville was the most used and appreciated by Gibbon; 'the French geographer is equally at home in every age and every climate of the world' is his praise for him when narrating the Arab invasion of Persia,³²¹ and there are references to him in no less than forty-eight chapters of *The Decline and Fall*.³²²

As a result of this reading and study, his reflections committed to writing in his *Journal* were on such subjects as the population of Rome,³²³ the navigability of the Tiber³²⁴ and the passage of the Alps by Hannibal.³²⁵ The route across the Alps of Hannibal was to be the subject of a footnote to Chapter XIV of *The Decline and Fall* when Gibbon was dealing with the Emperor Constantine's invasion of Italy from Gaul in AD 312.³²⁶ By the time he wrote Volume I of *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon favoured the route that he had himself followed in 1764 by Mount Cenis for the journeys of both Hannibal and Constantine. The content of these reflections was specifically historical and geographical rather than literary, as was that of a separate series of notes written in December 1763 and February 1764 and

320. *Memoirs*, p. 132.

321. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 429, footnote 16.

322. As recorded in the bibliographical index of Womersley's 1994 edition of *The Decline and Fall*, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, Vol. III, pp. 1191-2. Gibbon was to meet d'Anville (1697-1782) during his visit to Paris in 1777 and obtained his agreement to design four maps of 'Roman Geography of a size and nature suited to the History.' (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 152; there is a note by Sheffield to the letter of 14th July 1777 in which Gibbon told him of this fact: 'It is much to be regretted that Mr. D'Anville did not perform this engagement' in *Misc. Works*, Vol. II, p. 201.) Gibbon owned eighteen of his publications covering Europe and Asia. (*Keynes*.)

323. *Journal B*, pp. 49-50.

324. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-3.

325. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-13, where Gibbon weighs in the balance the conflicting evidence of Livy and Polybius, as a result of reading Cluvier.

326. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 449, footnote 63.

published in *The Miscellaneous Works*.³²⁷ The new direction of his thought, however, is not so much from literature to history, a change which was evident before his departure from England, but rather a concentration on Roman history, customs and geography. This was a natural development as the prospect of journeying into Italy became more vividly present to his mind,³²⁸ and would be associated thereafter for him with his stay in Lausanne.

In his reflections on the voyage of Rutilius Numatianus on 19th December 1763,³²⁹ Gibbon is even considering the nature and extent of Rome's decline six years after the conquest of Alaric in AD 410. He thinks Rutilius was wrong to suggest that Rome would rise again as it had after the battle of Cannae. Rome had lost its power. Its antiquity and size inspired a sort of veneration but it was an illusion that eventually dissolved. 'Peu à peu les Barbares le connurent, le mépriserent et le détruisirent.' From the time of Rutilius

tous les ressorts du Gouvernement étoient usés; le caractère national, la religion, les principes des loix, la discipline militaire; tout jusqu'au siège de l'Empire et à la langue même succomboit sous le tems & les révolutions, ou n'existoit déjà plus.

When the Empire revived, it was more the Empire of Constantinople or of Ravenna than of Rome. Reduced to its physical state and no longer regarded as a deity, the city 'ne representoit plus rien que des murs, des temples et des maisons bâties sur sept montagnes et situées sur les bords du Tybre.'

327. Three further notes which Gibbon wrote on Christmas Day, 1763, and 10th and 13th February, 1764, were concerned, respectively, with travelling times from examining the journey of Horace to Brundisium (sic) and the journey of Cicero into Cilicia; with the Fasti of Ovid; and with allegorical figures on the reverse of medals. (*Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 346-58 and Vol. V, pp. 35-9, in English translation; Add. Mss. 34,800.)

328. As noted above, it was not until 17th March 1764, however, that he received a letter from his father assuring him of sufficient funds to continue his journey.

329. *Journal B*, pp. 177-83.

When Gibbon came in Chapter XXXI of *The Decline and Fall* to describe the condition of Rome after the sack of Alaric, he recalled the optimism of Rutilius's view of the city in AD 416:

In less than seven years the vestiges of the Gothic invasion were almost obliterated, and the city appeared to resume its former splendour and tranquillity.³³⁰

The view was false, as he inferred in the use of the word 'appeared', and as he knew already when he commented on Rutilius in his *Journal* when first reading him on 19th December 1763. Chapter XXXI goes on to deal with the revolt of Heraclian and the revolutions in Gaul and Spain. Gibbon's review of the decline of the Empire in the West under the Emperor Honorius, who had presided over the fall of Rome from his retreat in Ravenna, was not dissimilar from his criticism of Rutilius in his *Journal*: 'Ce n'etoit pas sous le regne d'Honorius qu'il falloit peindre la force de l'Empire Romain'.³³¹

The mind of the historian already formulating the ideas of a history of Rome is clearly evident in his *Journal* entries and essays composed in the winter of 1763/4. In retrospect he could jokingly claim that on the eve of his departure from Lausanne 'few travellers more compleatly armed and instructed have ever followed the footsteps of Hannibal.'³³² It was as an imminent visitor to Italy that he was consciously preparing himself, but he was already writing of publishing his researches and he knew that an anthology of classical sources with editorial comment would no longer satisfy contemporary taste. His ideas had been forced amid the social

330. Vol. III, p.357. In a footnote Gibbon reveals he is using the evidence of Rutilius. In his library at Bentinck Street and at Lausanne he had an Amsterdam edition of 1687 of the *Galli Itinerarium* of Rutilius. (Keynes.)

331. *Journal B*, p. 178.

332. *Memoirs*, p. 132.

distractions and the amenities for scholarly research which Lausanne and its proximity to Geneva provided. The tension created by the conflicting appeal of society and study and by the finite amount of time that his finances would allow was ideal for developing his sense of vocation. The Swiss influence would remain strong, causing him to retain until 1767 the idea of writing the history of Switzerland's defence of its liberty; more significantly, it had already nurtured the intellect of the Roman historian and would again support him when he eventually chose to live in Lausanne to complete his life's work.

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When Gibbon departed for Italy on 18th April 1764, he was accompanied as far as Geneva by his host, Henri Crousaz, the seigneur of Mézery; the young Englishman, William Guise, the son of a Gloucestershire baronet, who was to remain with him throughout his tour of Italy; and three other companions from Lausanne.³³³ Gibbon stayed two nights at the Hôtel des Balances³³⁴ on the Place Bel-Air, close to where Caesar had crossed the Rhone. Gibbon regarded Mézery's generosity as 'un peu excessive'³³⁵ and regretted that he was too well entertained and preoccupied to do justice to the attractions of Geneva. These included for Gibbon the fortifications, which remained so much a ruling feature of social life that, when he had visited Ferney the previous summer, he could not return to Geneva until four o'clock in the morning because the gates of the city were closed.

333. They included 'le Capitaine Seigneux' who was in the service of Sardinia and who accompanied Gibbon and Guise across the Alps.

334. Identified by the editor of *Journal B* in footnote 5 on pp. 264-5.

335. *Journal B*, p. 270.

overnight.³³⁶ Other features that were remembered by him from previous visits were the promenades, the commerce, the public order and the cathedral dedicated to St. Peter.³³⁷

During his first stay in Switzerland, he had spent a week in Geneva in January 1755, after his disastrous gambling session in Lausanne,³³⁸ and nearly a month in September/October 1757, when Gibbon would have had more time and inclination for enjoying the sights of Geneva. The longer visit was made, as Pavillard explained to Gibbon's father, 'pour y faire connoissance avec quelques Savans et pour voir la Comedie.'³³⁹ Because of the continuing official ban on theatrical performances, Gibbon would have seen 'la Comedie', not in Geneva itself, but across the river Arve in Carouge, now a suburb, which then belonged to the Duchy of Savoy. In a letter to his father, dated 26th October 1757, Gibbon noted that

Une troupe de Comediens etoient à Geneve en passant. Il etoit bien naturel de saisir une occasion de prendre quelque Idée du Theatre François, et cette occasion (vu la Guerre) etoit presque unique.³⁴⁰

Among the plays performed was Voltaire's *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, which was completed and first performed at Voltaire's house outside Geneva, Les Délices, in 1755. Gibbon is likely to have seen it performed by the travelling players in 1757, since he described it as his 'favourite Orphan of China' when he saw Voltaire perform in it at Ferney in the summer of 1763.³⁴¹

During his previous visits to Geneva, Gibbon would have seen the

336. *Letters*, Vol. I, p.155.

337. *Journal B*, p. 265.

338. See footnote 113 above.

339. Add. Mss. 34,887.

340. *Letters*, Vol. I, p.74.

341. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 154-5.

neo-classical portico to the cathedral, started in 1752 and completed in 1756 to plans by the Piedmontese architect, Benedetto Alfieri. It is often regarded as being incongruous with the otherwise Romanesque-Gothic style of the cathedral, built mainly between 1150 and 1225.³⁴² Gibbon evidently approved of the classical style of the modern addition and in his *Journal* for 19th April 1764 refers to the cathedral with its 'belle facade de colonnes Corinthiennes.'³⁴³

At the commencement of his journey to Italy, Gibbon clearly rose above the effects of de Mézery's hospitality to make a close study of the library of Geneva which had provided him with the fourth volume of Graevius, containing Nardini's treatise. It would seem that he had not visited the library before, so detailed is his account of his morning's visit on Thursday, 19th April 1764.³⁴⁴ It was then situated in the Collège de Saint-Antoine, close to the Cathedral. Originally part of the Collège de l'Académie founded by Calvin, it had been reorganised and made a public library at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As Gibbon was told on his visit, the library had then rapidly increased in size through the legacies and contributions of the citizens of Geneva³⁴⁵ and at that time contained thirty thousand volumes chosen 'par des Savans éclairés dans un siecle de lumiere.' One perhaps hears the words of the Swiss librarian when Gibbon notes that in this way they had been spared 'tout le fatras des Scholastiques'³⁴⁶ with which other old libraries had been inundated, as Gibbon would know from his visits to ecclesiastical libraries in Switzerland

342. Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland*, *op. cit.*, of 1838 describes the portico as 'a blemish.' (p. 132.)

343. *Journal B*, p. 265.

344. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-70.

345. Gibbon indicates that those who bought citizenship of Geneva had to pay a tax to the library.

346. *Journal B*, p. 266.

during his first stay.

Gibbon goes on to list a number of special items, revealing that the collection included manuscripts and non-literary works which had already made it a museum of art, archaeology and natural history. These include an enormous bible: 'Un MS complet de la Vulgate en grand in-folio sur le Parchemin' which had been given to the Church of Geneva in the eleventh century by a bishop and which Gibbon judges to be at least a century older; a sixth century manuscript of sermons by St. Augustine which Gibbon considers to be of a later date; some tablets of wax on wood containing the household expenses of Philippe le Bel - 'Si j'avois eu le tems je l'aurois lue avec plaisir'; a votive silver shield of the fifth century found in the river Arve, close by the city - 'On y voit quelques soldats autour d'un chef dont le visage est caché par la visiere de son Casque'; miniature portraits of Oliver Cromwell and of Louis XIV - 'Le dernier surtout m'a fait plaisir'; a fine manuscript of Sallust with miniatures; a tooth of a narwhal of nine to ten feet in length - 'Elle est fort menue, lisse et tournée en spirale.'

Following this visit which Gibbon appears to have made without any companions, Gibbon lunched and dined at the house of Lord Mountstuart,³⁴⁷ de Mézery having departed. The host had collected a number of the English fraternity in Geneva. Gibbon lists eight names, including Colonel

347. Gibbon had met him at the town house of the de Mézerys in February. He was the eldest son of Lord Bute, who had been First Lord of the Treasury from May 1762 to April 1763. Aged 20 in 1764, Viscount Mountstuart was the British Envoy to Turin from 1779 to 1783 and eventually became the 4th Earl and 1st Marquis of Bute. Gibbon saw him in Florence and in Siena in September 1764 and, after his return to England, Gibbon would meet him with, among others, Colonel Edmonstone, Lord Abingdon, Holroyd and Guise, as a member of the Romans - 'A weekly convivial meeting was instituted by myself and my fellow travellers under the name of the Roman club.' (*Memoirs*, p. 139, and *Misc. Works*, Vol. I, p.200.)

Edmonstone³⁴⁸ and his 'Gouverneur', Lord Abingdon,³⁴⁹ and Peter Beckford,³⁵⁰ the cousin of William. This was a more sober gathering insofar as Gibbon writes that after lunch they went outside Geneva to see the paintings of M. Huber and the house of M. Tronchin. In such convivial company, Gibbon was getting close to the centre of the Genevan 'Enlightenment.' However, he was not impressed by the paintings of Jean Huber: 'qui ne sont pas grande chose', and at M. Tronchin's he saw only 'une façade assez jolie.'³⁵¹

It is particularly tantalising for the student of Geneva in the eighteenth-century that Gibbon finished his account of the city in this enigmatic way. Jean Huber, who in 1764 had married a cousin of Suzanne Curchod, is best known now for his paintings, pencil sketches and paper-cut silhouettes of Voltaire. Gibbon would have visited his house in Plainpalais, outside the ramparts of Geneva. It would have been a short afternoon ride from there across the river at the Place Bel-Air to M. Tronchin's house, assuming Bonnard, who was supported by the cantonal archaeologist and the deputy director of the Public Library in Geneva, was correct in identifying the house of M. Tronchin, tentatively, as Les Délices.³⁵² The house, which Voltaire had made famous by making it his home, held in 1764 a collection of art belonging to François Tronchin. It had been built between 1730 and 1735 in a classical French style, remodelled by Voltaire during his residence there from 1755 to 1758, and then retroceded to François Tronchin. It was

348. The Colonel was with Mountstuart in Florence, the following September.

349. Aged 24, he was a graduate of Oxford University, where he was at Gibbon's college of Magdalen, and lived in Geneva for several years. He became a keen supporter of Wilkes and an adversary of Burke in his advocacy of the French Revolution.

350. Also aged 24, he like Abingdon had been at Westminster School at the same time as Gibbon. In 1781, the year of Gibbon's second and third volumes of *The Decline and Fall*, he produced his *Thoughts upon Hare and Fox Hunting*.

351. *Journal B*, p. 270.

352. *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi & 270.

described by Voltaire in a letter of 23rd January 1755 to Jean-Robert Tronchin, the brother of François, as 'le palais d'un philosophe avec les jardins d'Epicure'.³⁵³ In confining his observations to the façade, Gibbon evidently did not go into the house. He was very resistant to ideas of grandeur, so far as Voltaire was concerned, describing his château at Ferney merely as 'a very pretty tho' small house'.³⁵⁴

* * *

Gibbon may have wondered, as he set out for Italy, if Geneva could have held more learning and more society for him than Lausanne. The young Mountstuart, for example, was able to assist him in his Italian tour by giving him an introduction to a Minister of State in Turin who had been the Sardinian envoy in London.³⁵⁵ When he reviewed in his *Journal* his second experience of Lausanne,³⁵⁶ he remarked on a pleasure-loving society open to foreigners which would be even more enjoyable 'si la Conversation n'avoit pas cédé la place au jeu.' Gibbon however was in a sober mood. He could not fail to feel very different emotions from those which he had at the time of his first departure in 1758. Then he had taken leave of his betrothed and of Deyverdun, who had become his best friend. He was conscious then of how much Lausanne had contributed to his education and character. Now, amidst all the last minute farewells, he was aware of a certain emptiness. He had met Holroyd through the coincidence of their itineraries and Switzerland had thus provided Gibbon with another lasting friendship; he

353. Quoted by Martine Koelliker in *Voltaire Chez Lui, Genève et Ferney*, by Jean Starobinski et al., Genève, 1994, p.14.

354. *Letters*, Vol. I, p.154.

355. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 172.

356. *Journal B*, p. 263.

felt gratitude to Pavillard for his continuing interest in him and to the de Mézerys for their hospitality throughout his stay. Yet, Deyverdun had been abroad during this second stay and Suzanne had left Lausanne a fortnight before his own departure, finally convinced that there could not be a romantic bond between them. It must have been an emotionally draining time for Gibbon and he sees affectation all around him: 'L'Affectation est le peché original des Lausannois.'

Gibbon wrote this judgement after farewells and preparations for his departure had kept him up until two o'clock in the morning. Even so, Gibbon could not end on that note. He concludes his *Journal* entry for 17th March 1764 with an appreciation of the manners and character of the de Mézery household and of their society: 'la compagnie de ses compatriotes et une liberté parfaite font aimer ce séjour à tout Anglois.' There is no suggestion there of dissatisfaction with a country which too readily accepted the rule of Berne. Rather, Gibbon recovering from his own emotional solitude is recognising the advantages which Swiss society has offered him. Revealingly, he wonders if he could find such comfort from living in London, remarking on his stay in Lausanne: 'Que je voudrois en trouver un semblable à Londres.' The failure of that wish would eventually lead Gibbon back to Lausanne, but nearly twenty years were to pass before he made the move.

6 REVIVAL OF THE SWISS HISTORY PROJECT

*I embraced a period of two hundred years from the association of the three peasants of the Alps to the plenitude and prosperity of the Helvetic body in the sixteenth Century.*³⁵⁷

Gibbon resumed his preferred theme for a historical composition, after his second return from Switzerland to England in 1765, when it appeared that he would have access to the German sources. Although the labour involved in his research and in the composition of his *Swiss History* covered a further period of two years, Gibbon confines his account of it to a single paragraph in his *Memoirs*.³⁵⁸ There he gives a dramatic flourish to the end of the project: having listened to the criticism of a literary society of foreigners in London, after a specimen of the text of the first book of the history was read to them unaware of the author's presence, he describes how he delivered the 'imperfect sheets to the flames.' Yet the text of the opening two chapters has survived in manuscript³⁵⁹ and was eventually published by Sheffield in his second edition of *The Miscellaneous Works*.³⁶⁰

The possibility that there was more than one copy of the first two

357. *Memoirs*, p. 141.

358. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-2.

359. In Add. Mss. 34,881, the text in Gibbon's handwriting amounts to 44 pages (wrongly numbered 43), with notes and additions on further pages.

360. Where the two chapters appear under Gibbon's title of 'Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses' in Vol. III, pp. 239-330. Bonnard appears to have thought (*Memoirs*, p. 307) that Sheffield had invented this title but in Add. Mss. 34,881 the published title appears clearly in Gibbon's handwriting.

chapters would allow for Gibbon's account of how he finally abandoned the project.³⁶¹ Of the two chapters of introduction which survive, the first is annotated with Gibbon's sources and the second is largely unannotated, indicating that he had not completed it. He sent 'the sheets of this history' to David Hume for his opinion with a letter dated 4th October 1767. The idea of burning the script was already in his mind as he promised to do that if he should advise it.³⁶² Hume's reply, however, was encouraging, only questioning Gibbon's use of French in preference to English.³⁶³

The background to this episode of wasted endeavour in the second half of the 1760's was a period for Gibbon of retrenchment and uncertainty, affected increasingly by the deteriorating finances and health of his father. The month-long meeting and exercise of the militia in the spring of each year held less interest for him than formerly, when there had been the stimulus of the threat of invasion from France. Gibbon was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel-Commandant in 1768 on the death of Sir Thomas Worsley, but he resigned 'an empty and barren commission' in 1770,³⁶⁴ glad to be rid of the routine and the uncongenial company of the inn. He began to feel more limited by his continued financial dependence on his father and he was conscious of a decline in the level of society which he kept after his return to England. Later, after his parliamentary career and after

361. Craddock in *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, p. 256, writes of 'his trick of memory', which 'if it has any significance, is likely to have the usual defensive value, protecting his conscious mind from discomfort it preferred not to re-experience.' There is no support for the further possibility that the surviving text is an earlier abandoned draft since there is no evidence from the accentuation in the manuscript that it could have been written before the Grand Tour; nor were the German sources available to Gibbon until 1765.

362. *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 218-9. Gibbon hastens to add: 'Let me say however I have perhaps vanity enough to make so unlimited a sacrifice to no man in Europe but to Mr Hume.'

363. 'On the whole, your History, in my opinion, is written with spirit and judgment; and I exhort you very earnestly to continue it.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. I, pp. 204-5.)

364. *Memoirs*, p. 140.

his renewed residence in Lausanne, he could write of this period:

I must own, however, with a blush, that my virtues of temperance and sobriety had not compleatly recovered themselves from the wounds of the militia, that my connections were much less among women, than men; and that these men, though far from contemptible in rank and fortune, were not of the first eminence in the literary (sic) or political World.³⁶⁵

The greatest pleasure for Gibbon in this difficult time of his life was the presence in England of Georges Deyverdun.³⁶⁶ Gibbon had not seen Deyverdun since his first residence in Lausanne, when their friendship had given Gibbon the great benefit of being able to share his thoughts and his studies with a like mind of similar age. His arrival in England was now the cause of Gibbon resuming his study of early Swiss history. Deyverdun's knowledge of German and his willingness to translate for him some of the key sources of information were important considerations: 'the assistance of Deyverdun seemed to remove an insuperable obstacle.'³⁶⁷

Like Gibbon, Deyverdun had reached an uncertain stage in his life and he was in need of employment while awaiting the security of his family inheritance. From 1761, he had been the governor of one of the sons of Prince Louis of Wurtemberg, living with the family of the Margrave of Schwedt in Brandenburg, and had therefore been absent from Lausanne when Gibbon was on his Grand Tour. They had, however, remained in

365. *Memoirs*, p. 139. There is an interesting insight in this quotation of the importance of women in Gibbon's social life in Lausanne in his later years.

366. Deyverdun lived in London from 1765 to 1769, spending the summers at the Manor House at Buriton in Hampshire where Gibbon's father and stepmother lived. The brick house of three storeys still stands with its view of the wooded steep slopes of the South Downs unchanged from Gibbon's time. On Sundays, Gibbon would have walked across the lawn and by the farm buildings to the Church of St. Mary. The rector, Philip Barton, had succeeded his father in 1751 and lived in the Old Rectory on the far side of the village pond until 1796. He was a scholar of Winchester, fellow of New College, Oxford, and canon of Exeter, who attended Gibbon's father, a Churchwarden, in his last illness and breakfasted with Gibbon in London on at least one occasion in 1773. (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 375.)

367. *Memoirs*, p. 141.

correspondence, discussing how they could meet again, with a mutual sense of frustration at being unable to control their lives because of their lack of financial independence.³⁶⁸

Gibbon had two projects in mind when Deyverdun arrived at Buriton in the summer of 1765, shortly after Gibbon's own return to England at the end of June. The idea of writing a history of Rome was 'still contemplated at an awful distance'³⁶⁹ and the choice which he had then to make was between Florence³⁷⁰ and Switzerland as a subject for a historical composition. At this juncture, Deyverdun's arrival was crucial. They daily conversed over 'the field of ancient and modern literature, and we freely discussed my studies, my first Essay,³⁷¹ and my future projects.' It became clear which was the better subject to take forward: 'our common partiality for a country, which was his by birth and mine by adoption'³⁷² meant that the history of the liberty of the Swiss would prevail as the preferred theme for at least another

368. On 9th July 1762, Gibbon wrote in his *Journal*: 'I finished my letter of eight pages to d'Eyverdun, it is a kind of pleasure I have not had a great while, that of pouring out my whole soul to a real friend.' (*Journal A*, p. 92.) The letter has not survived but from an earlier *Journal* entry for 9th June 1762, it is evident that Gibbon had already raised with Deyverdun the possibility of his coming to England and Deyverdun was regretting he had not accepted the offer. Gibbon comments in his *Journal*: 'D'Eyverdun from his character and way of thinking is the only friend I ever had who deserved that name.' (*Journal A*, p. 82.)

369. *Memoirs*, p. 140.

370. The history of the Republic of Florence, under the house of the Medicis had been a subject which Gibbon was considering in the summer of 1762 during his militia service. He saw it then as a contrast to the history of the Swiss, the decline of a rich and corrupt republic under the control of a masterful family, but with the advantage of two interesting issues for the 'Philosophical historian': the restoration of learning and the arts under Lorenzo and the character and fate of Savonarola. Gibbon saw much to sustain his interest in this subject when he was in Florence, as when he visited the Riccardi palace on 10th August 1764 and wrote in his *Journal*: 'Je n'ai pu entrer sans une reverence secrete dans ce berceau des arts, dans une maison d'où la lumiere s'est repandue dans tout l'occident, où sous les yeux d'un Laurent le Magnifique, un Politicien, un Lascaris, un Gaza, un Pic de la Mirandole, un Marsile Ficini faisoient revivre les grands hommes de la Grece et de Rome pour instruire leurs contemporains.' (*Gibbon's Journey from Geneva to Rome*, edited by Georges A. Bonnard, London, 1961, p. 204.)

371. Gibbon had arranged in June 1761 for twenty copies of his *Essai* on publication to be sent to his friends in Lausanne. Deyverdun evidently had a copy at Schwedt in Brandenburg because Gibbon received his response to it in a letter of two sheets on 9th June 1762. Gibbon wrote in his *Journal*: 'He has read my book, is pleased with it in general, but makes some very sensible remarks upon it.' (*Journal A*, p. 82.)

372. *Memoirs*, p. 141.

two years.

In his *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*,³⁷³ Baridon wonders if Gibbon was influenced in this decision by the interest aroused by Rousseau's visit to England from January 1766 to May 1767. The idea is very speculative, especially in view of Gibbon's long commitment to his preferred theme, but it is an interesting thought that Gibbon would have been more keenly aware, because of his continuing active interest in Swiss affairs, of Hume and his difficulties caused by his support for Rousseau at this time and might therefore be more inclined to approach him for advice on the Swiss History. Evidence of Gibbon's interest in Rousseau's visit to England is contained in a letter of 23rd September 1766 to a Swiss friend, Victor de Saussure; Gibbon's judgement of Rousseau's conduct is shrewd and critical:

Il s'est retiré dans le fond d'un désert, ou on le laissait végéter si paisiblement qu'il s'est vu dans la nécessité de se brouiller avec tous nos gens de lettres pour faire un peu parler de lui.³⁷⁴

The authorities which Deyverdun, through his translations from the German, was able to introduce to Gibbon were the contemporary fifteenth-century account of the campaigns of the Duke of Burgundy by Schilling, the sixteenth-century chronicle of Tschudi, and the history of Lauffer and the Dictionary of Leu written in the eighteenth century. In the cantonal archives at Dorigny outside Lausanne, five large copy-books of translations exist in Deyverdun's and an assistant's handwriting,³⁷⁵ with a few pencilled

373. *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

374. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 212.

375. Gibbon noted in his *Memoirs* that an assistant was used for making extracts from Lauffer and Leu. (p. 141.) The copy-books numbered 5-9 in the Archives Cantonales Vaudoises are in Deyverdun's hand except for the extracts in 7 and 8 from Leu.

comments by Gibbon on the translations of Lauffer and Schilling.³⁷⁶ These authorities were additional to those in French and Latin which Gibbon already knew, including such writers as de Watteville and Aeneas Sylvius, whose *Historia Friderici Imperatoris* written before his election to the papacy in 1458 he possessed in a Strasbourg edition of 1685.³⁷⁷

Clearly Gibbon intended his work to be original, wishing to go back to contemporary sources of information. In both of the surviving chapters, he refers to 'la Chronique de Jean de Wintherthur' or 'Joan. Vitoduran.' whom he describes as 'auteur presque contemporain.'³⁷⁸ In the letter of 23rd September 1766, already cited, to Victor de Saussure,³⁷⁹ Gibbon asks about a manuscript in the Bibliothèque des Pasteurs in Neuchâtel containing a history of the wars of the Duke of Burgundy.

Je souhaiterais donc de me procurer une copie, une traduction ou un extrait selon le degré de son mérite, etc; mais comme je ne connais ce M. S. que d'une façon très vague j'aimerais bien l'examiner de plus près moi même ou par les yeux d'un ami. Si vous consentez à me prêter les vôtres, je n'en connais pas de plus perçans.³⁸⁰

He wishes to know if later historians, Lauffer especially, have used it and

376. The extracts from Lauffer include a reference to the English archers who fought at the battle of Morat in 1476. Gibbon underlined the passage and commented: 'Les Anglois sont la fleur des archers. Ils devoient leur supériorité à leur discipline. 1. Ils étoient tous à pied sans chevaux. 2. Une partie des Nobles combattoient à pied parmi eux. 3. Chacun portoit un poi sa palissade dont ils se retranchoient.'

377. Keynes, p. 222.

378. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 245. He would have found his work in the *Thesaurus historiae Helveticae*, published in Zurich in 1735, which Gibbon had at Bentinck Street and later at Lausanne. (Keynes.)

379. De Saussure had been recommended to Gibbon in Lausanne by Deyverdun in his absence. He was born in the same year as Gibbon, was a justicier in Lausanne, becoming the last bourgmestre under Bernese rule from 1796 to 1798 and a member of the Sénat Helvétique in 1798. At the time of his death in 1811, he was a member of the Grand Conseil Vaudois. There is a remarkable glimpse of the future when Gibbon jokingly remarks in his letter: 'J'espère que cette épître vous trouvera occupé à plaider dans le *Forum* ou à opiner dans le Sénat', and, after dismissing the relevance of size and grandeur in comparisons of states, goes on to exhort de Saussure 'à devenir conseiller et Bourgmestre le plutôt que vous pourrez et à vous assurer que je respecterai le premier magistrat d'un peuple libre, cent fois plus que le premier des esclaves dorés d'un despote.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p.207.)

380. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 210.

how it compares with Schilling's contemporary account of the battles of the Duke of Burgundy. 'En tout cas j'aimerais mieux posséder le superflu que de manquer du nécessaire.'³⁸¹ A copy of Schilling that he has received is incomplete and the title-page mentions three prints or plans of the battles. Deyverdun has told him that the German word used for prints is ambiguous:

Trois estampes ne seroient bonnes que pour les enfans. Trois plans seroient très utiles pour l'intelligence de ces combats dans lesquels il règne une sorte de confusion qu'il faut en partie attribuer aux généraux des Suisses et en partie à leurs historiens.³⁸²

If they are plans of any merit, Gibbon would like to have them together with Scheuchzer's large map of Switzerland.³⁸³ He would be thrilled if there were maps of the environs of Basle, of Morat and of Grandson but he doubts whether he can hope for that.

Such outpourings to a friend reveal how engrossed and conscientious Gibbon was in aiming to compose a history of independent worth, which would cut through the fables of Switzerland's origins and establish clearly its foundation. The impossibility of achieving that, especially with the disadvantage of researching at a distance from the sources, would account in itself for the eventual decision to abandon the task, but in the meantime he is quite inexhaustible in his requests. He wishes to know of the latest writings on the William Tell controversy and asks de Saussure for printed works on that and other subjects, such as ecclesiastical issues and the succession of the Prussian kings in Neuchâtel. A package of these books could be addressed to 'the Reverend Mr. Bugnion in Cranbourne Alley, Leicester fields,

381. *Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 210-11.

382. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 211.

383. Printed in Zurich in 1712.

Gibbon requests de Saussure not to execute more of these commissions than he can attend to without difficulty, emphasising the importance of the Neuchâtel manuscript, and he assures him how he will meet the expense:

Si le major Grand est à Lausanne il aura la bonté de vous rembourser des frais que cette affaire vous occasionnera; s'il n'y est pas encore de retour, je vous enverrai une lettre de change plus régulière.³⁸⁵

However, one wonders how such requests on the basis of 'Si vous ne me répondez point je reconnoîtrai votre justice; si vous me répondez je reconnoîtrai votre bonté'³⁸⁶ were received by de Saussure. There is no surviving correspondence to indicate that de Saussure was able to help Gibbon³⁸⁷ and it may be significant that the books listed in the letter are not included in the catalogue of his Bentinck Street library.³⁸⁸ De Saussure was already embarked on his public career - Gibbon addresses him as 'Justicier à Lausanne'³⁸⁹ - and was not so readily available as Deyverdun to assist

384. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 212. Antoine Bugnion was minister at the Swiss church in Moor Street, London, from 1762 to 1771; he was a close friend of Deyverdun and rented his house called La Grotte when Deyverdun was travelling abroad in 1778-9. (*Historic Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 417-8 and 420-2.)

385. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 212. Georges Grand was a banker who lived with his wife and three daughters near the church of St. Laurent in the commercial quarter of Lausanne. Gibbon used to enjoy dining and playing cards at their house during his second stay in Lausanne. Grand was a major in the Vaudois militia and Gibbon was an interested onlooker, one Sunday morning in December 1763, at an exercise of his company of Grenadiers. Gibbon was well informed on Swiss military preparedness, for he commented in his *Journal* for that day: 'Quand on songe que ces miliciens au lieu d'être payés par l'Etat se fournissent eux-mêmes leurs habits, leurs armes et jusqu'à leur poudre, on ne peut qu'être content du coup d'œil de la troupe, et pour des soldats qui n'exercent que douze fois par an ils ont fort bien fait.' (*Journal B*, p. 259.) Grand had moved to Amsterdam by the time Gibbon returned to Lausanne in 1783.

386. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 213.

387. Barloun in *Edward Gibbon et la Mythe de Rome*, op. cit., p. 294, assumes that the books which Gibbon requested in the letter were received from de Saussure through the agency of Bugnion.

388. Among the books requested by Gibbon was Loys de Bochat's *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Histoire du Différend entre le Pape et le Canton de Lucerne*, Lausanne, 1727, which would have been one of the most accessible for de Saussure to obtain. In *Keynes*, the book is catalogued as one which Gibbon did not acquire until he had settled in Lausanne. (p. 183.)

389. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 205.

Gibbon. Nevertheless, de Saussure remained one of Gibbon's treasured friends, as will be seen in the next chapter, although no correspondence has survived from the period of Gibbon's residence at La Grotte in Lausanne.

In the first chapter of the *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses*, Gibbon cites an extensive range of sixteen authorities in the margins of the manuscript and they are faithfully reproduced by Sheffield in the *Miscellaneous Works*. Gibbon has clearly made much use of the extracts from Tschudi and Leu. There are twenty-three references to the sixteenth-century work that Gibbon called 'the great chronicle of Tschudi,'³⁹⁰ which had remained in manuscript until its publication in Basle in the 1730's.³⁹¹ Gibbon refers to a dozen entries in Leu's Dictionary,³⁹² about such subjects as the names of Swiss cantons and the character of Agnes, Queen of Hungary, the daughter of the Emperor Albert, assassinated in 1308, and founder with her mother of the abbey of

390. The phrase appears in the *Memoirs*, p. 141, and also in a footnote to the essay *Digression on the Character of Brutus*. (*Misc. Works*, Vol. IV, p. 96.) Tschudi (1505-72) had been taught by Zwingli and studied at Basle and Paris, later becoming the chief magistrate in Glarus, the capital of the mountain canton of that name. His *Chronicon helveticum* was the first and only diplomatic history of Switzerland in Gibbon's time and had remained in manuscript until it was published in Basle in two volumes in 1734 and 1736. Gibbon also owned his *Historische und topographische Beschreibung von dem Ursprung Galliae Comatae*, published at Constance in 1758.

391. H. S. Offler in his article entitled 'Edward Gibbon and the Making of his *Swiss History*,' in the *Durham University Journal* for 1949 admires Tschudi's industry in compiling his history from inscriptions and archives but questions his integrity, believing him to have faked some of the evidence to prove his family's claim to nobility. Tschudi as a historian still has his defenders but he led Gibbon to believe the origin of the Swiss Confederation to be in 1307, rather than in 1291, a date which has become generally accepted during this century as shown in the official celebrations of the seven hundredth anniversary in 1991. Christopher Hughes reviewed the conflicting evidence of the Confederation's foundation in *Switzerland in the Nations of the Modern World* series published by Ernest Benn Limited, London and Tonbridge, 1975, and concluded that histories of the early years of the Confederation are more tendentious than is generally recognised (pp. 76-81).

392. Jean-Jacques Leu (1689-1768) was born at Zurich and became Bourgmestre of that city in 1759. He was noted for his works on the constitutions and laws of the Swiss cantons. His *Dictionnaire Universel de la Suisse* published in twenty volumes from 1746 to 1763 included material on civil, ecclesiastical and natural history, topography, genealogy, etc.

Königsfeld.³⁹³ The *De Rebus Helvetiorum* of Frans Guilliman³⁹⁴ is another source frequently cited by Gibbon in his *Swiss History*, and also in *The Decline and Fall*,³⁹⁵ as an authority for important events in the early years of the Swiss Confederation.

Gibbon also cites authorities not specifically concerned with Swiss history in making comments of a more general nature. For example, he refers to two Italian sources. First, Giannone's *Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli* is cited when he remarks that Austria and Swabia had been without a ruler since the death of the Emperor Frederick II and of Conradin, 'que leur malheureux destin avoit conduits à Naples pour y périr sur un échafaud.'³⁹⁶ Then, in order to support his account of how the bishops of Basle and Constance acquired the wealth and rank of princes, Gibbon directs his readers in a footnote³⁹⁷ to Muratori's *Dissertazioni sopra le Antichità Italiane*. There they will find 'une érudition profonde, une bonne critique, et une sage hardiesse;' and though he writes of Italy, they will find the same principles at work. As in *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon uses the evidence of

393. Described by Gibbon in his *Journal de mon voyage* (*Miscellanea*, p.21) and referred to in Chapter XXXVIII of *The Decline and Fall*. (Vol. IV, pp. 112-3.)

394. Guilliman spent his early life in the Catholic canton of Fribourg and became professor of history at Freiburg-im-Breisgau in Germany. His *De rebus Helvetiorum sive antiquitatum libri V* was published in 1598 and his *Hapsburgica sive de antiqua et vera origine Domus Austriae* in 1605. Both works are cited by Gibbon in his *Swiss History* and he would have found both in his copy of the *Thesaurus historiae Helveticae*, published in Zurich in 1735.

395. Vol. IV, pp. 112-3, and Vol. VII. pp. 229-30, where there are references to the Abbey of Königsfeld and the early history of Zurich.

396. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 242. Giannone's *Istoria* was one of three books singled out by Gibbon from his reading during the period at Lausanne in 1755, when he experienced 'the most extraordinary diligence and rapid progress', which 'may have remotely contributed to form the historian of the Roman Empire.' (*Memoirs*, pp.74 and 79). The other two were Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* and the Abbé de la Bléterie's *Vie de l'empereur Julien*. Gibbon owned the 1753 edition of Giannone's *Istoria*, published at The Hague, but the version which he first read in Lausanne was in a French translation, published at Geneva in 1742. Gibbon wrote in his *Memoirs* that it caused him to observe 'with a critical eye the progress and abuse of Sacerdotal power.' (p. 79.) He also remembered that Pascal and Giannone 'first accustomed me to the use of irony and criticism on subjects of Ecclesiastical gravity.' (*The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.)

397. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p.248.

authorities writing of different countries and sometimes of different centuries to support his view of the unchanging, universal and secular nature of human motivation.³⁹⁸

Not surprisingly, Gibbon cites *de Watteville's Histoire de la Confédération Helvétique*. De Watteville was the statesman historian whose work had attracted Gibbon's attention at the time of his 1755 tour of Switzerland and who advertised his reliance on facts rather than fable in narrating the early years of Swiss independence.³⁹⁹ He is used by Gibbon as one of two authorities⁴⁰⁰ on the historical language division between the French and German cantons in a footnote in the first chapter and is cited again in the second chapter in the margin to a footnote about an early example of arbitration under Swiss law.⁴⁰¹ It is interesting to note how Gibbon follows de Watteville's intention of eschewing fable in his history. He introduces the subject of the origin of the Swiss cantons sagely, with more than a touch of irony, as he was to do in his account of the early Germans in Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall*. In a suitably lofty manner, he pronounces:

Je pardonne aux historiens Suisses les fables dont ils ont cru embellir les premiers tems de l'histoire de leur nation, mais je dois épargner à un siècle philosophe les Taurisques, les Huns, les Goths parmi lesquels ils leur ont cherché des ancêtres.⁴⁰²

He may have had Loys de Bochat in mind, with his tendency to find a Celtic origin in the early place names of Switzerland. It is only at the beginning of

398. Another authority cited in a footnote is Voltaire but in his case Gibbon registers a note of criticism for confusing Leopold, Duke of Austria, who died at the battle of Morgarten in 1315, with the Duke of the same name who dealt treacherously with Richard Cœur-de-Lion in 1193. (*Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 272.)

399. An account of his influence on Gibbon has been given in Chapter 3 above, pp. 53-6.

400. The other is Guilliman.

401. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 244-5 and p. 312

402. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 252.

the twelfth century that the rationalist historian in Gibbon can see the emergence of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden,

distingués en trois communautés libres et alliées, indépendantes mais soumises à l'empire, et à son chef, qui leur envoyoit quelquefois des juges pour décider en dernier ressort des affaires criminelles.⁴⁰³

However it is Gibbon's treatment of the William Tell story which is the main test of his empirical approach. He sees no significant role for William Tell in the formation of the Confederation. There were reasons enough for the confederates to take action against the arrogance of Austria for the historian not to dwell on a story 'aussi singulière qu'elle me paroît douteuse.'⁴⁰⁴ Gibbon had to be discreet if he was to avoid alienating his Swiss readers. In expressing his doubt, he does not deny Tell's existence nor his exploits but he diminishes their effect and regrets the fame that surrounds them:

mais son imprudence, soutenue par la hardiesse et couronnée par le succès, est devenue la source de sa gloire, et par une injustice assez bizarre, le nom de Guillaume Tell a obscurci les noms des vrais fondateurs de la liberté Helvétique.⁴⁰⁵

It was a diplomatic way of treating a story which involved the national

403. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 252-3.

404. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 265. Gibbon was interested in contemporary controversy as to the authenticity of the William Tell legend. He wrote on the manuscript of his *Swiss History*: 'Note sur Haller le fils' and Sheffield went to the trouble of asking the grandson of Albert de Haller for an explanation. In an appendix to the two chapters of the *Swiss History* printed in Volume III of *The Miscellaneous Works*, Sheffield reported the reply as follows: 'That his father published a speech, which he made as orator of an assembly of young patricians of Berne...In the speech, M. de Haller disputed the authenticity of the story of William Tell, more for the purpose of exercising his talent for discussion, than because he doubted the fact, of which so many testimonials and chapels erected at the time on the spot, and other documents, left little doubt...The Canton of Uri, however, was highly offended, and demanded satisfaction from the Canton of Berne. M. de Haller absented himself from Berne for some time, and afterwards wrote another tract to prove the authenticity of the story; which satisfied the Canton of Uri, and the affair was forgotten.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 329-30.)

405. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p.265.

pride of the Swiss and which was clearly a fable for Gibbon.⁴⁰⁶ Even so, his scepticism may have been one reason for the 'free strictures and unfavourable sentence' of the literary society of foreigners that winter evening in London which caused him to give up his history.⁴⁰⁷

Instead of giving to the story of Tell the importance which accounted for a national rising, Gibbon included from the chronicle of Tschudi illustrations of Austrian oppression of greater credibility, in accordance with the principle, expressed in his *Essai*, that more can be explained by small events on the domestic scene than by grand public events. They include the story of the murder of a bailiff, an agent of Austria, by the husband of a woman whom he had tried to seduce. Gibbon prefaces the tale with the philosophical remark that intimates a general cause of human motivation to be found in all ages and all nations:

L'honneur des femmes tient aux sentimens les plus délicats du cœur humain; et les attentats qui portent le trouble et l'amertume dans le sein des familles ont donné naissance à plus d'une révolution.⁴⁰⁸

406. Gibbon believed that the story was borrowed from a Danish legend as he revealed in his text: 'Mais notre siècle, qui substitue un doute éclairé à la crédulité de nos ancêtres, semble reprouver une fable qui n'a pas même le mérite de l'invention; et ne voit dans Guillaume Tell que l'imitation assez grossière d'un héros Danois aussi fabuleux peut-être que lui.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 265-6.) Gibbon knew of the current interest in the Danish legend and he had told de Saussure in the letter already cited that 'les pièces de la controverse de *Guillaume Tell*, fable danoise, me seroient peut être utiles.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 211.)

407. *Memoirs*, pp. 141-2. H. S. Offler in his article entitled Edward Gibbon and the Making of his *Swiss History*, *loc. cit.*, has described how the controversy was started in 1760 when Uriel Freudenberger, a minister in the canton of Berne, had published a pamphlet, with the title quoted by Gibbon to de Saussure, in which he related a story told by the twelfth-century chronicler Saxo Grammaticus of a Dane called Toko shooting an apple from his son's head. Offler believed the information which Sheffield received from the grandson of Albert de Haller was confused. However that may be, Gibbon is evidently dealing with a situation of great national sensitivity which had caused unwary Swiss scholars to live in exile and have their work burnt by the public executioner. Gibbon's treatment of the Tell legend, given his distrust of fable and knowledge of the chronicle evidence of a parallel damaging to national pride, wins respect for its honesty and sense of balance, especially in the light of subsequent reversals in historical judgement. These are summarised by the Swiss historian, William Martin, in *Switzerland from Roman Times to the Present*, London edition of 1971, as follows: 'For years, historical criticism, misled by a few wrong dates and implausible facts, has tended to view such events as the oath of Grütli, the seizing of the castles and the incident between the bailiffs and William Tell as pure legend. However, recent work shows that these tales contain a high degree of probability, and they enable us to reconstruct the sequence of events infinitely better than dry nineteenth-century logic ever succeeded in doing' (p. 28.)

408. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 258-9.

Such comments prepare the reader for the movement of opinion which led to the first oath or pact of the Swiss confederates in the meadow at Grütli on the shores of Lake Lucerne. Although its date has been moved back by historians of this century from 1307 to 1291, Gibbon was right to see the future lasting significance of the alliance of the three mountain cantons in defence of their liberty.

Throughout his account of the emergence of Switzerland from the feudal obligations of the Empire, Gibbon emphasises the Swiss confederates' love of freedom and industry. The less mountainous areas are cultivated 'par des mains libres et industrieuses.'⁴⁰⁹ The influence of Montesquieu can be seen in Gibbon's explanation of their nature: 'Un air vif, une terre ingrate, une vie dure avoient formé le caractère de ce peuple.'⁴¹⁰ When the reins of feudal law were loosened after the decline of Frederick II's control of his empire in Germany in the thirteenth century, thirty years of baronial intrigue and conflict in the area from Lake Constance to as far as Lake Geneva had led to 'cette variété confuse de mœurs, d'intérêts, et de préjugés, qu'on n'éprouve que parmi les peuples libres.'⁴¹¹ Their wealth lay in their cattle and agriculture. Industry, 'qui marche à la suite de la liberté,'⁴¹² enabled them to buy their freedom from the most onerous duties from lay or ecclesiastical powers. In his desire to relate their love of freedom to their industrious nature, Gibbon resorts to his visual memory of the cradle of

409. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 240.

410. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 252. Later in his narrative, when he begins his account of the accession in 1351 of the canton of Glarus to the Confederation, Gibbon repeats the reference to climate: 'Le pays de Glaris a de grands rapports avec les cantons de Schwitz et d'Uri, dont il n'est séparé que par de hautes montagnes. Le ciel et la terre sont les mêmes; et l'on sait assez combien l'homme est esclave du climat.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 317.)

411. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 245.

412. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 249.

Hapsburg power which he had seen in 1755 in and around the Roman ruins of Vindonissa:

Une assez petite enceinte contient des monumens de tous les siècles. On peut tracer encore les ruines de Vindonisse, ville Romaine, ruinée au quatrième siècle par les Allemans contre lesquels elle avoit servi de rempart. Elle étoit le siège de la vingt-unième légion, et des premiers évêques de Constance. Un peu plus loin le donjon de Habsbourg nous offre l'image de la tyrannie féodale et le berceau de vingt empereurs. Les débris encore plus considérables de l'abbaye de Konigsfeld nous montrent les trophées abattus de la superstition. Enfin la petite ville de Bruck (Brugg), qui termine le paysage, nous présente dans son industrie et sa propreté un objet de comparaison assez favorable au siècle dans lequel nous vivons.⁴¹³

Gibbon was to recall the scene again in Chapter XXXVIII of *The Decline and Fall*:

The philosophic traveller may compare the monuments of Roman conquest, of feudal or Austrian tyranny, of monkish superstition, and of industrious freedom.⁴¹⁴

The theme of freedom and industry was central to Gibbon's response to Switzerland and related his thought to the French philosophes, such as de Jaucourt's article on 'Traite des nègres' in Vol. XVI of the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1765.⁴¹⁵ Love of liberty is also unreservedly associated with democracy in Gibbon's description of the three cantons which formed the first confederation. As already noted in Chapter 3 above, Gibbon had included their leaders as 'the three peasants' in a select list of national liberators in his essay entitled *Digression on the character of Brutus* and that is how he continued to think of them when writing his *Memoirs*.⁴¹⁶ In the

413. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 243-4.

414. Footnote 25 on pp. 112-3 of Vol. IV.

415. For example: 'Men and their liberty are not objects of commerce; they can be neither sold nor bought nor paid for at any price... It is freedom, it is industry that are the real sources of abundance. As long as a nation conserves this industry and this freedom, it has nothing to fear.' (translated by S. Gendzier and included in Volume I of the *Texts of The Enlightenment*, published by The Open University in 1992, pp. 15-16.)

416. *Memoirs*, p. 141.

first chapter of his Swiss history, he writes of the Swiss character:

La liberté lui étoit chère, et cette indépendance qui naît de l'égalité des fortunes et du sentiment de ses forces, étoit le premier ressort de son âme.⁴¹⁷

Gibbon believes that natural equality was practised in the general assemblies of the democratic cantons, where nobles mixed with peasants and learnt to respect each other, growing accustomed to thinking that 'la première distinction parmi les hommes est celle des talens utiles à la société.'⁴¹⁸ The patriotic sources of his information no doubt influenced his enthusiasm for the unanimity of Swiss resistance to the arrogance of the House of Austria, but he did use the pro-Austrian Guilliman in addition to Tschudi and Leu and he was not without his own experience of the constitutions of the democratic cantons. Some twelve years earlier in his *Journal de mon voyage* he had commented on the social equality practised in the General Assembly of Schwyz.⁴¹⁹ He writes with the conviction of personal knowledge in his Swiss history when he states that legislative power in the three cantons has been retained by the general assemblies of citizens until his day.⁴²⁰

Gibbon's personal involvement with his subject also adds a dramatic quality to the style of his writing. He begins a paragraph at the start of his narrative of armed resistance to the tyranny of Austria with the words: 'Enfin ce jour arriva...'⁴²¹ The drama is most clearly felt when he prepares the reader for battle scenes where the Swiss infantry are heavily outnumbered by the feudal force of knights and retainers mustered by their

⁴¹⁷ *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 252.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ See pp. 49-50 above.

⁴²⁰ *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 252.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 266.

Austrian opponents. The battle of Morgarten, the Lauppen war,⁴²² the skirmish at Tatwyl and the siege of Zurich provide Gibbon with a series of set pieces to prove his imaginative and creative abilities, as distinct from his analytical and philosophical insight; such as he was later to show in his accounts of palace revolutions after the golden era of the Antonines in *The Decline and Fall*.⁴²³ An example of the immediacy and lively detail that Gibbon could capture at this stage in his career as a historian is provided in this account of a conspiracy in 1350 led by the Count of Hapsburg against the new constitution of Zurich, designed by Rudolph Brun, the Burgomaster:

Un jeune garçon fut le sauveur de l'état. Le hasard lui fit entendre les discours de quelques soldats du Comte de Habsbourg, qui se communiquoient mutuellement les ordres qu'ils avoient reçus de prendre les armes à une heure après minuit, de s'emparer de la maison de ville, et de massacrer Rodolphe Brun et toute sa faction. Il apprit jusqu'au mot de ralliement qui servoit à distinguer les séditeux. Déjà l'heure approche, le tems presse, et le danger croit à chaque instant. Ce jeune homme court chez le bourgemestre, le fait lever, et lui apprend que dans peu de momens, la liberté et les amis de la liberté vont perir. Brun prend son parti avec ce courage tranquille qui voit le danger et ne s'en étonne point. Il change d'habit avec son valet, traverse les flots séditeux, qui remplissent déjà les rues et qui n'attendent que le signal du carnage, perce jusqu'à l'hôtel de ville, s'enferme dans le clocher, et sonne le tocsin...⁴²⁴

A passage, such as this one, makes one regret the text does not continue to include the Burgundian Wars, in which Charles le Hardi, as Gibbon called him in his *Journal de mon voyage*, would surely have

422. In 1339, with the aid of the Swiss cantons, Berne defeated an alliance of counts, barons and knights with Imperial and Austrian support besieging the town of Lauppen (Laupen). Gibbon wrote of the victory: 'L'Europe apprit pour la première fois qu'une infanterie de paysans avoit battu en rase campagne la gendarmerie plus formidable encore par son courage que par l'armure pesante dont elle étoit couverte.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 296.) The Bernese force was led by Rudolph d'Erlach, an ancestor of the Bailiff at Lausanne from 1787 to 1793 who became a close friend of Gibbon.

423. For example, the murder of the Emperor Commodus and the election of Pertinax in Chapter IV of *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, pp.105-8.

424. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 309.

featured as a vivid and formidable threat to the Swiss Confederation.

Gibbon would have remembered the ubiquitous presence of the Duke during his journey through the northern cantons and doubtless he would have embroidered his account of the military engagements with his own memories of the terrain and his own continuing experience of military life.

The victory of the Swiss confederates at Morgarten in 1315 allowed full scope for Gibbon to draw on his visual memory. The monks at Einsiedeln were the cause of this historic event. Their rights were protected by the House of Austria and they antagonised the forest cantons in the Imperial election by supporting Frederick, Duke of Austria, against Louis, Duke of Bavaria. Gibbon spotlights in a footnote the 'comble de la Superstition,' as he had called the Abbey in 1755:

Le contraste de ses bâtimens magnifiques avec le pays affreux qui les entoure fait naître l'idée des palais enchantés qui paroissent tout à coup au milieu des déserts.⁴²⁵

The memory of Einsiedeln's wild surroundings inspired such fanciful descriptions, giving the author some independence from his written sources. 'Ces religieux, qui ne l'étoient que de nom, insultoient tous les Suisses qui passoient sur leurs terres, les battoient, et les dépouilloient.'⁴²⁶ When the Swiss cantons retaliated with armed force, the monks resorted to Austrian protection and their force of thirteen hundred knights in armour and twenty thousand footmen made defeat seem inevitable for the Swiss. Some two thousand mountain Swiss, however, with stones and arrows and armed with heavy halberds were able to use the defile of Morgarten, between the mountains and Lake Aegeri, to ambush the larger force and cause havoc

⁴²⁵. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 273.

⁴²⁶. *Ibid.*

amongst the mounted warriors.

Gibbon's account of the cause, the situation and the results of the battle of Morgarten forms a fitting climax to his first chapter. With that characteristic sense of balance and of awe under the eye of eternity, the most famous example in his historical writings being perhaps his description of the condition of Rome in the last days of Pope Eugenius IV in 1430 with which he begins the final chapter of *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon assesses his achievement in describing the advent of a new European nation. At the beginning of the final paragraph of the first chapter, he writes:

Je viens de tracer d'une plume foible mais impartiale l'histoire d'une révolution obscure qui a changé le sort de quelques paysans des Alpes.⁴²⁷

It is a sleight-of-hand of a mature historian who, after such a modest statement, can go on to cast his eye over European history in general and conclude that few great struggles in the name of justice have in fact been productive of such moderation and lasting benefit to the community at large. This obscure revolution merits 'l'attention du philosophe qui cherche l'homme dans la chaumière plutôt que dans les palais.'⁴²⁸

The influence of Switzerland causes Gibbon to be more aware of the domestic values of a free peasantry at this stage of his career than when, for example, he describes the society without letters and arts of the German tribes in Chapter IX of *The Decline and Fall*.⁴²⁹ However, in case he might

⁴²⁷. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 282.

⁴²⁸. *Ibid*.

⁴²⁹. Where, for example, he contrasts 'the man of learning' with 'the illiterate peasant': 'The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses but very little his fellow-labourer the ox in the exercise of his mental faculties.' (Vol. I, p. 236.)

be accused of wrongly condoning a rebellion against established custom, he distinguishes between, on the one hand, the respect of the Swiss confederates for the legitimate rights of the Empire and, on the other, the excesses of the Peasants' Revolt in England, the terror of the Jacquerie in France after the battle of Poitiers, and the risings of the peasants in the name of Anabaptism in Germany.⁴³⁰ Such disturbances had secured 'le royaume du seigneur.' In contrast, 'the philosophe' may appreciate in the founding of the Swiss nation

un spectacle plus rare et plus digne de la nature humaine; un peuple vertueux, qui a défendu les droits les plus saints par les moyens les plus légitimes; qui a eu de la fermeté dans le péril et de la modération après la victoire.⁴³¹

In advocating the virtue of democracy, Gibbon never forgets what is owed to custom and order; there is a world of difference between the communism of the English peasants of 1382 and the constitutionalism of the assemblies of the forest cantons who rebelled against the injustice of arrogant overlords.

The oath at Grütli had led to armed resistance to Austrian

430. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 283. In referring to these social disorders, Gibbon cites Froissart's *Chronicle* and the *Ecclesiastical History* of J. L. Mosheim. Gibbon had a personal connection with Mosheim, a Lutheran theologian who had been a professor at Helmstedt University and chancellor of Göttingen University. Gibbon had met his daughter at the château de Mézery in August 1763; she had married the Russian Count Golovkin and lived on an estate in the vicinity of Lausanne. Gibbon described her as 'vive et gaye. C'est la mode ici de la trouver aimable. Ces deux Epoux sont un modèle d'affection conjugale.' (*Journal B*, pp. 4-5.) Gibbon had a collection of her father's writings, including the 1765 and 1782 London editions of *An Ecclesiastical History* (Keynes), an example of a work which Gibbon had at Bentinck Street, which he apparently left in London on his departure to Lausanne in 1783 and which he purchased in a later edition in Lausanne. Mosheim's *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii*, Helmstedt, 1753, in both the Bentinck Street and Lausanne catalogues, was the most useful source for Gibbon's account of the primitive church in Chapter XV of *The Decline and Fall*. Gibbon's copy is now in the collection of the Boston Athenæum; it is cited as one of his four main authorities for his theological history of the doctrine of the incarnation in Chapter XLVII of *The Decline and Fall*, where he describes the author: 'Less profound than Petavius, less independent than Le Clerc, less ingenious than Beausobre, the historian Mosheim is full, rational, correct, and moderate.' (Vol. V, p. 104.) Gibbon also used his *Institutionum Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Helmstedt, 1764, for his account of the heresies of the twelfth century in Chapter LXIX of *The Decline and Fall*, Vol. VII, p. 229.

431. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 283.

infringements of the independence in law and administration to which the forest cantons had grown accustomed, and eventually in 1315 to the glorious victory of Morgarten. The approximation to a historical example of the social contract, given fresh life with the publication of Rousseau's celebrated work earlier in the decade, was present in Gibbon's mind, but his response to the idea was cautious. He writes of the formal alliance of the three cantons after the battle of Morgarten:

L'on peut découvrir ici la première ébauche de la société civile, et ce contrat social, que tant d'écrivains, mieux instruits des droits de l'homme que de son histoire, ont vainement cherché dans les grands états.⁴³²

Such awareness of the relevance of historical developments to contemporary issues raises the historian above his dependence on the chronicles for his commentary. His caution may reflect Hume's scepticism about the historicity of the social contract. Hume's essay *Of the Original Contract* was first published in the edition of *Essays Moral and Political* of 1748.⁴³³ Gibbon cites the essay in Chapter V of *The Decline and Fall*, where he questions the accuracy of Hume in supposing that Septimius Severus invaded Italy in AD 193 with the status of general rather than of emperor.⁴³⁴ Gibbon would also have been aware, when he sent the sheets of his history to Hume, that his ideas on the inter-relationship of industry and political liberty would be acceptable to the author of the essays entitled: *Of Commerce, Of Refinements in the Arts and Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*.

The other living historian whose influence over Gibbon was prevalent

432. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 280.

433. Hume's *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* were acquired by Gibbon in their successive editions of 1760, 1768 and 1777. (Keynes.)

434. Vol. I, p. 122, footnote 32.

at this time was Voltaire. The immediacy of Gibbon's narrative style, with its sense of detail, movement and sound, as shown in the passage quoted above about the conspiracy of 1350 against the Burgomaster of Zurich, is reminiscent of the language of the author of the *Histoire de Charles XII* and the *Siècle de Louis XIV*.⁴³⁵ Gibbon's sense of his subject being fit for a 'philosophe' is also in line with the rationalist approach to history which Voltaire had used to replace the idea of providence in his *Charles XII*.⁴³⁶ In addition, the political philosophy of associating commerce with social equality and liberty accords with Voltaire's appreciation, as a young man alienated from Paris, of the social situation in Holland and Britain, as expressed in his correspondence and the *Lettres Philosophiques* of 1734.⁴³⁷

Unlike Montesquieu, Voltaire was a philosophe whom Gibbon had known personally since his first stay in Lausanne; he had been an eager observer of his dramatic performances at Lausanne and Ferney. The experience made Gibbon aware of the more eccentric aspects of Voltaire's character and abilities, and this knowledge gave him a more detached regard for Voltaire the historian than that which he had held for Montesquieu. When he refers to Voltaire in the Swiss History, as noted above,⁴³⁸ his purpose is to reveal an inaccuracy in his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, though there is a warmth of respect in his comments: 'L'imagination de M. de Voltaire l'a emporté. Nous serions pourtant fâchés qu'il en eut moins.'⁴³⁹ There were to be more critical references to Voltaire in the footnotes of *The Decline and*

435. As Baridon has argued in *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-8.

436. In his biography, *Voltaire*, London, 1969, Theodore Besterman asserted that Gibbon 'owed more than he was inclined to acknowledge' to Voltaire's treatment of providence in history (p. 409).

437. Haydn Mason in his biography, *Voltaire*, London, 1981, writes of Voltaire's second trip to Holland in 1722: 'Already one finds an awareness that an inter-dependent relationship exists between commercial success, social equality, intellectual liberty and political freedom.' (p.6.)

438. In footnote 398.

439. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 272.

Fall, showing Gibbon's growing disenchantment with his skills and judgement as a historian and playwright and a desire to assert his independence.⁴⁴⁰ Gibbon's interest in the man and his lifestyle remained firm at least during his lifetime, as his letters reveal to those who would take a delight in him.⁴⁴¹ Though Gibbon refers to Voltaire in the *Memoirs* as 'the most extraordinary man of the age,' he qualifies his assessment when he describes his eagerness in Lausanne to meet him for the first time with the remark that he had then rated him 'above his real magnitude.'⁴⁴²

Montesquieu's influence as a philosophical historian on the Swiss History is evident in a passage in the second chapter about Zurich. Gibbon's personal knowledge of Zurich from his 1755 tour, when he had observed the hard-working inhabitants and in particular the silk factory of M. Escher, is reflected in his account of how Zurich joined the Swiss Confederation. He writes of the early silk industry of Zurich and its wealth originating in an industrious and indefatigable people: 'la plûpart des travaux utiles y fleurissoient depuis les premiers tems.'⁴⁴³ But he is mindful of a passage in his *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*,⁴⁴⁴ where he had commented on how an analysis of the general causes of human affairs can become a philosophical history of man in the hands of a Montesquieu. Zurich now inspires a

440. Claude Rawson has listed almost a dozen such references in his essay, 'Gibbon, Swift and irony' in *Edward Gibbon Bicentenary essays*, published by The Voltaire Foundation, 1997, p. 188.

441. This interest finds expression in a piece of misinformed gossip which Gibbon relates to his stepmother in a letter from London to Buriton in April 1768: he promises to send to her '*La Princesse de Babylone*, a new Romance of Voltaire which is a very agreeable (sic) absurd trifle. A propos poor Voltaire is almost ruined. He had intrusted most of his money to that expensive scoundrel the Duke of Wirtembergh, who paid him a much greater interest for it than any body else would give. The Duke is ruined, the security worth nothing and the money vanished. Voltaire has dismissed several dependants who lived in his house and even his niece Madam Denys all with handsome presents; and keeps only a man and three maids, with Père Adam an old Jesuit that plays at Chess with him from morning to night. I am really sorry for the poor old man; as he spent his fortune much better than he acquired it.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 227.)

442. *Memoirs*, pp. 82-3.

443. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 298.

444. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 69, already quoted on page 75 above.

remarkable passage from Gibbon, moving from the general to the particular, on the theme of commerce and liberty. It needs to be quoted at length to give the full effect of Zurich as an example of industry in Gibbon's imagination:

Les objets les plus généraux n'existent pour les hommes que relativement à leurs idées particulières. C'est ainsi que chaque ordre porte dans la société les mœurs et les préjugés de son état. Le noble ne daigne jeter les yeux que sur un petit nombre d'hommes destinés par le droit de la naissance à regner sur la multitude. Pour le militaire la société politique n'est qu'un camp toujours armé contre ses voisins et qui ne reconnoît d'autres loix que les volontés de son chef. Le prêtre apperçoit partout des institutions divines et le don de la terre que Dieu a fait à ses élus. Le négociant sent que des hommes libres par la nature sont unis par leurs besoins réciproques. L'esprit du commerce est celui de la liberté, et le commerce ne peut fleurir qu'à l'ombre des loix. Celui de Zurich s'accrut avec les privilèges qui se multiplioient tous les jours sous la douce administration des abbesses. L'Empereur Frédéric II mit enfin le sceau à sa liberté en confirmant tous ses droits et en la déclarant ville impériale et inaliénable.⁴⁴⁵

Here is the most expansive statement of Gibbon on the effect of freedom in a well-ordered society on individual enterprise and the accumulation of wealth.

The interest that Gibbon had shown in the range of cantonal constitutions from the democratic to the aristocratic on his 1755 tour appears again in his account of the reformation of the Zurich council of state under the successors of Rudolph Brun. Under the sovereign power of an executive council of two hundred chosen by the bourgeoisie, with a

445. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp.298-9. One wonders if the passage is an example of the 'Ambitiosa ornamenta', for which David Hume gently chided Gibbon without specifying them in his response to Gibbon's letter of 4th October 1767, forwarding the manuscript. The term, 'Ambitiosa ornamenta', was Gibbon's own which he used in his letter of 25th October, thanking Hume for his comments. (*Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 222-3.) Hume had written in his letter of the day before: 'Your use of the French tongue has also led you into a style more poetical and figurative and more highly coloured than our language seems to admit of in historical productions: for such is the practice of French writers, particularly the more recent ones, who illuminate their pictures more than custom will permit us.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. I, p. 204-5.)

general assembly retained for matters concerning religion and external affairs, Gibbon indicates that over the centuries Zurich had maintained a middle position between the aristocratic and popular cantons. He is aware, however, that his account of constitutional developments is very general and lacking in detail⁴⁴⁶ and he seems anxious to maintain the main thread of his narrative which is the story of how Zurich came to join the Swiss Confederation in 1351, after its new constitution was threatened by dissidents with the support of a besieging Austrian army. With the help of the Swiss cantons, Zurich survived to become an impenetrable barrier to the House of Austria's designs to recover its former influence in the Swiss cantons.

Gibbon concludes the second chapter of his *Swiss History* with an account of Berne's accession to the Swiss Confederation. For him, Berne remained the most aristocratic and expansionist of the cantons, as he had described it in his 1755 *Journal* and in his *Letter on the Government of Berne*. Its alliance of mutual aid with the Swiss cantons in 1352 was the result of a gradual realisation of its self-interest since it had first called for the aid of the Swiss confederates to relieve Lauppen in 1339. There is less commitment according to Gibbon in Berne's attachment to maintaining liberty against injustice.

Berne apporta dans les conseils des Suisses une politique plus ferme, plus réfléchie et plus éclairée; mais elle y apporta en même tems ses desseins intéressés, le goût des conquêtes, et une ambition moins soumise aux loix de la justice qu'à celles de la prudence.⁴⁴⁷

In ending his account of the heroic early period of Swiss liberty in this qualified way, Gibbon indicates that his knowledge of the subsequent

446. In a footnote, he expresses concern that he has given too superficial an account of the continuing influence of the nobles in the constitution of Zurich. (*Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 305.)

447. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 352.

evolution of Berne's constitution into an oligarchy, and his personal experience of Bernese rule in the Pays de Vaud would have increasingly influenced any further history of the Swiss that he might have written.

It would have been fitting for Gibbon, as he had originally intended, to have taken his general history of Switzerland to the end of the fifteenth century when the treaty of Basle confirmed the independence of the Swiss Confederation.⁴⁴⁸ He would then have completed the history of its emergence and successful resistance to the designs of the House of Austria, the Duke of Burgundy and the Empire of Maximilian I, a unified theme for which Gibbon had shown special affection during and since his first stay at Lausanne. The result would have been at least a slim volume on the subject of liberty and nationhood and there would have been no shortage of dramatic interest with the successive defeats of Charles the Bold at Grandson, Morat and Nancy.⁴⁴⁹ It is a loss of some importance for it would have provided an intermediate stage in Gibbon's historical writings between his first publication, the *Essai*, and *The Decline and Fall*, and this would have shown the development of his narrative style more fully. It would have established more obviously for posterity the genuine feeling for liberty, national independence and industry that Switzerland had inspired in Gibbon and it would have moderated his reputation of being a Roman patrician in outlook. Moreover, he had done the preparatory work; further time spent on composition might have affected his collaboration with Deyverdun on the

448. In this sense, the title of 'Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses' was accurate.

449. 'I should have described the deliverance and victory of the Swiss who have never shed the blood of their tyrants, but in a field of battle; the laws and manners of the confederate states; the splendid trophies of the Austrian, Burgundian, and Italian wars; and the wisdom of a nation, who after some sallies of martial adventure has been content to guard the blessings of peace with the sword of freedom.' (*Memoirs*, p. 141.)

Mémoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne,⁴⁵⁰ but it would not have necessarily delayed his composition of *The Decline and Fall*, which was not begun until February 1773.

In his letter to Victor de Saussure dated 23rd September 1766, cited earlier in this chapter, Gibbon bound his friend to secrecy about the Swiss project and remarked:

Il y a quelque chose de si ridicule dans l'idée d'un Anglois qui veut écrire sur l'histoire suisse, que je n'oserai avouer ma hardiesse qu'au cas qu'elle soit un peu justifiée par le succès.⁴⁵¹

To the end of his life Gibbon was cautious about airing new projects lest they became generally known before he had anything of substance to offer,⁴⁵² but there appears to be a special consciousness of trespassing on others' ground in the instance of the Swiss History. When he outlines in the second chapter the development of the constitution of Zurich, he apologises to his Swiss readers in the footnote already mentioned about his treatment of the continuing influence of the nobles:

J'attends d'ailleurs de l'indulgence ou plutôt de l'équité des Suisses qu'ils n'oublient jamais qu'étranger moi-même, j'écris principalement pour les étrangers.⁴⁵³

Such considerations about the amount of detail needed for his history and about the identity of his readers would have been one of the main reason for him not continuing his work. Moreover he would have been conscious of his

450. The literary journal, in imitation of the defunct *Journal Britannique* of Matthew Maty, which Deyverdun with the aid of Gibbon published for the years 1767 and 1768. (*Memoirs*, pp. 143-4.)

451. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 212.

452. In a letter dated 12th October 1790 to Ernst Theodor Langer, the librarian to the Duke of Brunswick in Wolfenbüttel who had succeeded Lessing in that position in 1781, Gibbon asked for assistance in sketching the history of the House of Brunswick. He concludes the letter with a similar entreaty as he had made to de Saussure: 'J'ose en même tems Vous demander un profond secret: un mot indiscret seroit répété par cent bouches, et j'aurois le desagrément de voir dans les Journaux, et bientôt dans les papiers Anglois, une annonce, peut-être défigurée, de mes projets littéraires, qui ne sont confiés qu'à Vous seul.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 205-6.)

453. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 305. Footnote 446 above refers.

dependence on Deyverdun and his remoteness from his sources. Slender and superficial might well be the results of the completed project and Gibbon was to pronounce in his *Memoirs*, when recalling the uncertainties of his situation: 'An historian should command the language, the libraries, and the archives of the country of which he presumes to write.'⁴⁵⁴

David Hume had asked Gibbon why he was writing in French when he responded to the manuscript that Gibbon had sent him through Deyverdun.⁴⁵⁵ Gibbon may have thought that his subject was for those who regarded Paris as the centre of philosophical enquiry. He had indicated in his letter to Hume of 4th October 1767 that he remembered the favourable reception of his *Essai* in Paris.⁴⁵⁶ That would seem to be the most convincing reason for his retention of French at a time when he had no prospect of an early return to residence abroad. After more than two years of renewed life with his family, it is difficult to imagine that he found French a more natural language for him to use except in the sense that it was the language of Montesquieu, still his avowed teacher in examining the general causes of the rise and fall of empires. Yet he declared in his second letter to Hume of 25th October 1767, responding to his comments on the manuscript:

I write in French, because I think in French; and strange as it may seem, I can say with some shame, but with no affectation, that it would be a matter of difficulty to me, to compose in my native language.⁴⁵⁷

454. *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, op. cit., p. 301.

455. *Misc. Works*, Vol. I, pp. 204-5. Hume had, in February 1767, been appointed Under-Secretary to General Conway, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, and Deyverdun, who was known to Hume through correspondence relating to Rousseau's stay in England, had obtained a clerkship in the same office in the following month. It is remarkable that Gibbon should owe his introduction to Hume to his Swiss friend. Later, Gibbon associated becoming acquainted with Hume with the *Mémoires Littéraires*, for which Hume provided a note on Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third*. (*Memoirs*, pp. 143-4.)

456. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 218.

457. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 222.

That he could think in French is not surprising after his education from the age of sixteen to nearly twenty-one in Pavillard's home; but the evidence of his letters at this time, ranging from literary business⁴⁵⁸ to social news for Holroyd, his father and his stepmother, belie his claim to unfamiliarity with expressing his ideas in English.⁴⁵⁹ There is more conviction in his next sentence: 'I must indeed acknowledge that a desire of being more generally read, invited me to indulge my taste for the French tongue.'⁴⁶⁰

Growing realisation of the limited interest of a general history of the Swiss in one of the languages of that nation, in addition to the strictures of that unidentifiable society of foreigners in London, would have convinced Gibbon of the futility of his project. Much later in his *Memoirs*, with only a distant memory of his text because of his belief that it had been destroyed, Gibbon added a further reason, confessing that he had been aware that his style, 'above prose and below poetry, degenerated into a verbose and turgid declamation.'⁴⁶¹ However, one of the main purposes of this chapter has been

458. Gibbon was corresponding at this time with Thomas Becket, publisher of his *Essai*, about his and Deyverdun's plans for the literary journal, *Mémoire Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne*. In listing the proposed contents of the journal, Gibbon shows a playful ability to persuade a publisher who had responded cautiously to the new venture: '1. Curious anecdotes which may happen & which will entertain foreigners with some superficial ideas of the manners and character of so singular a nation as we certainly are. 2. The English Theatre, both in respect to plays and actors. 3. The State & progress of the polite Arts. The Exhibitions will furnish some curious circumstances. Translations from English poets & original pieces when short & interesting will not be neglected. & here & there a good extract from a German writer will help the sale of the work in this country as those writers are now very fashionable & my friend is perfectly well acquainted with them.' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 217.)

459. His letters to Hume are nevertheless rather stilted in comparison and Norton comments on a slip in the first where Gibbon has written 'et' for 'and': 'G's style in this letter is so French, that it seems he must have been thinking in that language.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 218.)

460. When he came to assess the public reception of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in his *Memoirs*, his view had changed and he could reflect: 'The conquests of our language and literature are not confined to Europe alone; and the writer who succeeds in London is speedily read on the banks of the Delaware and the Ganges.' (p. 183.)

461. *Memoirs*, p. 142.

to show that such a verdict, which has swayed some later assessments,⁴⁶² is invalid. The story, its theme and its events are treated with sufficient dramatic and narrative skills to capture the imagination of the interested reader. The verdict of the author, having omitted in his *Memoirs* any reference to Hume's earnest exhortation to him to continue with his history,⁴⁶³ fails to carry conviction, as much as does his unsupportable speculation that the French language itself 'is ill adapted to sustain the vigour and dignity of an important narrative.'⁴⁶⁴

Gibbon was always a severe critic of his own work, as can be seen in his early life in his hesitation over the publication of his *Essai* and later in his account in the *Memoirs* of the false starts and the stylistic faults of *The Decline and Fall*. In particular, he was very conscious in his historical writings of the twin perils of dull chronicle and rhetorical declamation.⁴⁶⁵ Writing after the completion and publication of his major work, Gibbon would surely see in an unfavourable light an earlier abandoned work which he believed no longer existed. When Sheffield found the manuscript, he judged it was worth publication and a modern judgement can endorse that view. As a specimen of eighteenth-century philosophical history, it has a curious and maybe unique distinction as the work in French of an

462. Craddock in *Young Edward Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-6, follows closely the judgement of Offler in his article 'Edward Gibbon and the Making of his *Swiss History*', *loc. cit.*, that his authorities were not good enough to enable Gibbon to write a worthwhile history. Low is very dismissive in his judgement: 'Although the writing and composition reveal a great advance on the *Essai*, the writer has not done more than embroider, sometimes too floridly as Hume remarked in his letter, an agreeable narrative on the framework of his authorities. The critical and creative mind is absent.' (*Edward Gibbon, 1737-1794*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.) In contrast, the French scholar, Baridon, is much more appreciative of Gibbon's French: 'Loin d'y déplorer un excès d'ornements, le lecteur d'aujourd'hui trouve cette *Introduction*, rapide dans son déroulement, simple de ton, vivante par endroits et dénuée de toute complaisance pour les effets oratoires et les maniérismes personnels.' (*Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, *op. cit.*, p. 297.)

463. Hume's letter of commendation in Add. Mss. 34,886 was first published by Sheffield in the second edition of *The Miscellaneous Works* in 1814. (Vol. I, pp. 204-5.)

464. *Memoirs*, p. 142.

465. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Englishman inspired by Montesquieu. Whatever its literary merit, however, it can also be seen as a long-meditated working out of early impressions at first hand of the Swiss character, supported by assiduous reading of the best authorities up to that time.

In this chapter, the influence of Switzerland on the life of Edward Gibbon can be seen in the subject of his researches and in the collaboration with his Swiss friend, Deyverdun. His *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses* was the last flowering of that preferred theme which had been inspired by the journey with the Pavillards in 1755. It marked a development in his historical writing, still close to the philosophical spirit of Montesquieu and Voltaire in their historical writings which he had first imbibed in Lausanne. The scepticism of Hume is also present, but Gibbon clearly reveals himself as an ardent admirer of political liberty within the bounds of accepted laws. In the origin of the Swiss nation, he has an appropriate subject for expressing his belief in the close association of liberty with democracy and industry, and in the natural opposition of liberty to prejudice and dogma. It is unlikely that Gibbon could have expressed such ideas so unreservedly had he not had to leave the environment of his family and Oxford at the age of sixteen and complete his education in Lausanne. After 1767, his increasing involvement in his family business affairs and the eventual realisation of his parliamentary career would keep him away from the direct source of his enlightened views for another sixteen years. The following chapter will show how his interest in Switzerland and its history was maintained in that time and how the society of Lausanne eventually became an irresistible attraction for him, in wishing to devote his life to study and congenial company.

7 GIBBON'S RETURN TO SWITZERLAND

*...that Country which a Philosopher would perhaps prefer to the rest of Europe.*⁴⁶⁶

*L'Amitié, la Philosophie et le gout me parleront toujours en faveur de la Suisse.*⁴⁶⁷

In his *Memoirs*, where Gibbon discusses the progress of the composition of the first volume of *The Decline and Fall*, he mentions that he soon gave up 'the modest practice of reading the manuscript to my friends.' He is quite sure that his decision was justified. Because 'some will praise from politeness, and some will criticise from vanity,' he concludes that the author himself is the best Judge of his own performance: none has so deeply meditated on the subject, none is so sincerely interested in the event.⁴⁶⁸

It was a judgement fortified by the fame that his life's work had brought him, but it was also a lesson that he may have originally learnt when he listened to the disappointing reception of his *Swiss History* by the anonymous literary society.

Although that experience might have caused him to lose interest in the history of Switzerland, it is evident from the surviving catalogues of his library that he continued to buy books on the subject. Among the books in

⁴⁶⁶. In a letter from Gibbon to his stepmother, dated 3rd July 1775. (*Letters*, Vol. II, p.78.)

⁴⁶⁷. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 268, in a letter to Deyverdun of 2nd December 1770.

⁴⁶⁸. *Memoirs*, p. 156.

his Lausanne library were Robert de Vaugondy's *Dictionnaire géographique, historique et politique de la Suisse*, published in Geneva and Lausanne in 1776, J. R. Sinner's *Voyage historique et littéraire dans la Suisse occidentale*, published in Neuchâtel in 1781 and William Coxe's *Lettres sur l'état politique, civil et naturel de la Suisse*, published in Paris in 1782.⁴⁶⁹ It is possible that these may not have been acquired until after his return to Lausanne in 1783. Gibbon's double career as a Member of Parliament and as the historian of the Roman Empire would have been demanding and might have prevented him from pursuing an interest that had become peripheral. Yet these were the years after the compilation of the catalogue of the Bentinck Street library, when the number of his books are known to have increased at a rapid rate.⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, he never denied himself leisure to refresh his historical imagination, as when he gave himself a year's rest from composition after the publication of the second and third volumes of *The Decline and Fall* in March 1781 in which to read

with new pleasure the Iliad and Odyssey, the histories of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, a large portion of the tragic and comic theatre of Athens, and many interesting dialogues of the Socratic school.⁴⁷¹

Whenever it was that he acquired those recently published books on Switzerland, there can be no real doubt that the history of Switzerland

469. Another book of William Coxe which Gibbon was interested in buying at the time of his departure for Lausanne was the *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark*. He had paid for it as a subscriber, before its publication in London in 1784, and was waiting for it to be delivered to him in Lausanne when he wrote to his bookseller, Peter Elmsley, on 26th September 1784. (*Letters*, Vol. III, p.3.) Gibbon was to meet Coxe in Lausanne the following year, travelling as a tutor to Samuel Whitbread. (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 44-5.)

470. Although the books on Switzerland are listed in *Keynes* as being in Gibbon's library only in Lausanne, it is quite possible that he had acquired them before his departure from London in 1783, because the Bentinck Street catalogue contains nothing later than 1777 and the existing copy may be a fair copy of an earlier list, *Keynes*, p.37. The 1777 catalogue lists 1,920 titles in about 3,300 volumes, *ibid.*, p. 20. By the time of his departure from Bentinck Street, Gibbon estimates, in a letter of 24th June 1783 to Deyverdun, that he has a total of five to six thousand volumes. (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 335.)

471. *Memoirs*, p. 164.

remained of interest to Gibbon throughout his adult life, as the references to Swiss history and its sources in *The Decline and Fall* reveal.

Nor was the idea of returning to live in Switzerland forgotten when circumstances allowed Gibbon to think of his long-term intentions. During the years of his father's declining health and the subsequent period while Buriton remained Gibbon's main residence, it was impossible for him to consider any permanent move, but when he wrote to Deyverdun on Sunday, 2nd December 1770, to tell him of his father's death, he revealed the importance which Switzerland continued to hold in his mind.

Soyez persuadè mon cher Ami, que l'idée de vivre avec vous entrera pour beaucoup dans mes projets. L'amitié, la Philosophie et le gout me parleront toujours en faveur de la Suisse.⁴⁷²

He has much business to attend to in London and at Buriton and he can look forward to seeing his friend only in England in the next fifteen months and yet he cannot resist recalling the social scene in Lausanne:

Vous êtes donc au sein de la Patrie, dans cette Lausanne à laquelle je pense avec plaisir; vous avez retrouvè la tendresse de Madame de Bochât, l'amitié de Votre de Saussure, et les agremens d'une Societè, qui doit cependant avoir essuyè bien des changemens.⁴⁷³

Among those changes, since Deyverdun's most recent departure from England in 1769, was the misfortune of Victor de Saussure, who had married Louise de Vignoles in 1769 and had already suffered bereavement. Gibbon commiserates with him:

Ainsi donc le pauvre de Saussure a connu avec une triste rapiditè, tout ce qu'un Cœur Sensible peut éprouver de felicitè et de malheur! Embrassez le de ma part, assurez le, que je le compterai toujours dans ce petit nombre d'amis dont la memoire est trop bien gravèe dans mon amè pour Que le tems l'absence et l'eloignement puissent jamais

472. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 268.

473. *Ibid.* Madame de Bochat was the widow of Loys de Bochat and aunt of Deyverdun; he was to inherit from her the house called La Grotte. Votre de Saussure is a reference to Victor de Saussure.

Gibbon then asks Deyverdun to remember him to all his acquaintances in Lausanne. The sincerity of his feelings for Lausanne and its society after an absence of over six and a half years is clearly evident.

Eventually there came a time when it was hardly possible for Gibbon even to dream about an early return to living in Lausanne. It was not so much his involvement in the composition of *The Decline and Fall*, but his membership of the House of Commons, which was to make that vision remote and impractical. During the period of ten years from 1773 to 1783, when he managed to combine the careers of a historian and a member of Parliament, he had also attained

the solid comforts of life, a convenient well-furnished house,⁴⁷⁵ a domestic table, half a dozen chosen servants, my own carriage, and all those decent luxuries whose value is the more sensibly felt the longer they are enjoyed.⁴⁷⁶

Before there could be any reality in the prospect of residing in Lausanne again, that sense of welfare had to be undermined by loss of office at the Board of Trade and the likelihood of losing his seat in Parliament, anxieties which produced a growing awareness of the expense of a life divided between study and society in London.

By 1780, Gibbon's political career had become uncertain and he was aware that his patron and cousin by marriage, Edward Eliot, would not support his candidature at the next election. In a letter of 11th August of that year, Gibbon outlined to Eliot the consequences of losing his seat and his place at the Board of Trade: 'such is the unpleasant state of my private

474. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 269.

475. The Bentinck Street house in London.

476. *Memoirs*, p. 154.

affairs that with my office I must resign all future prospect of living in England.⁴⁷⁷ The following month, when he had been assured of a new seat by Lord North, Gibbon wrote to Holroyd of his feelings about this new development:

You will growl if I lament in some sort that it has disconcerted a very pleasant scheme a sweet vision of *Helvetic* retirement: I know that a prudent man ought not to make himself happy.⁴⁷⁸

The attraction of Lausanne had again been felt, but Gibbon had been swayed by the influence of his political friends, reminding him of the call of public duty. The 'sweet vision' had been pushed away, but it became clearer again as Lord North's power continued to decline and Gibbon's place at the Board of Trade came under the threat of Burke's economic reform programme.

Moreover, he was aware of a material change in Deyverdun's circumstances. After leaving employment in the Secretary of State's office in 1769, Deyverdun had been tutor in 1769-70 to Richard Worsley, son of Gibbon's Lieutenant Colonel Commandant in the South Hampshire militia, and, in 1772-4, to Philip Stanhope, who became the 5th Earl of Chesterfield in 1775. He travelled abroad in 1774 with Lord Middleton and, in 1775-9, with Alexander Hume, brother of the Petersfield Member of Parliament. The new course to his life came in 1779 when he inherited from his aunt the house called La Grotte in Lausanne and returned to live in it.

Gibbon took the step which led to the final resolution of his dilemma when he wrote to Deyverdun about the uncertainty of his political future on 20th May 1783. His correspondence with his friend since his father's death

⁴⁷⁷. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 248.

⁴⁷⁸. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 251.

had been very intermittent. This is partly explained by his continuing to see Deyverdun when he visited England in his role of tutor to young gentlemen doing the Grand Tour. Gibbon was aware moreover that his friendship with Deyverdun could withstand years of separation and silence resulting from their disinclination to write unless there was a pressing matter. Even Deyverdun's failure to take on the work of translating into French the first volume of *The Decline and Fall* did not undermine the friendship.⁴⁷⁹ Gibbon never ceased to be impressed with how he could open his mind to his friend about treasured projects in spite of the distance between them. He continued to make passing reference to the option of 'Helvetic exile' in discussing his parliamentary future with his correspondents in England during the declining years of Lord North's administration, but this was no more than wishful thinking until his letter to Deyverdun of 20th May 1783.

The letter reveals the anguish in Gibbon's mind after he has lost his place at the Board of Trade and when he has grown disillusioned with his parliamentary career. Rarely does Gibbon express himself so self-disparagingly.

Que l'homme, l'homme Anglois, l'homme Gibbon est un sot animal. Je l'espere, je le desire, je le puis, mais je ne sais pas si [je] le veux, encore moins j'executerai cette volonté.⁴⁸⁰

Loyalty to Lord North can no longer assure him a future in Parliament.

479. On 7th May 1776, after the publication of the first volume, Gibbon wrote to Deyverdun: 'Et la traduction? Allez vous bientôt me faire lire et bruler dans le reste de l'Europe? Apres une courte suspension dont il est peu necessaire de detailler les raisons j'ai repris l'envoi des feuilles à mesure qu'elles sortoient de la presse. Elles passaient regullerement par Gottingue, d'ou M Sprenger aura eu soin de vous les faire parvenir; et depuis longtems l'original Anglois doit etre tout entier entre vos mains. Quel usage en avez Vous fait? la traduction est elle achevée? dans quel tems, dans quel endroit, sous quel forme vous proposez vous de la faire paroître. Je ne laisse pas de craindre les accidens qui ont pu arriver en route et de craindre surtout votre paresse ou bien vos distractions...' (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 108.) It was not until 4th November that Gibbon could write to Holroyd: 'At last I have had a letter from Deyverdun, wretched excuses, nothing done, vexatious enough. (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 120.)

480. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 327.

Si je ne consultois que mon cœur et ma raison je romprois sur le champ cette indigne chaîne de la dépendance, je quitterois le Parlement, Londres, l'Angleterre, je chercherois sous un ciel plus doux, dans un pays tranquille, le repos, la liberté, l'aisance et une société éclairée, et aimable.⁴⁸¹

If he were to attain his freedom from place-seeking, his choice of residence would not be in doubt. 'Lausanne a eu mes prémices, elle me sera toujours chère par le doux souvenir de ma jeunesse.' His memories of its society go back thirty years: 'je me rappelle les polissons qui sont aujourd'hui Juges, les petites filles de la société du printemps, qui sont devenue grand'mères.' But naturally it is his friendship with Deyverdun which he values most at Lausanne. There is an undoubtable conviction here in the words which he addresses to Deyverdun, as he refers to the shared ideas and openness of mind which he has always experienced in his company:

Autrefois dans nos libres épanchemens nous avons cent fois fait le projet de vivre ensemble et cent fois nous avons épluché tous les détails du Roman avec une chaleur qui nous étonnoit nous-mêmes.

This lyrical quality in his writing indicates, as Baridon has noted, one of the great friendships of the century,⁴⁸² though the candour is characteristic of Gibbon's letters to distant friends.

Gibbon goes on to envisage living in a separate apartment in Deyverdun's commodious house with common rooms and table; but Deyverdun's circumstances may have changed and, instead of living with him, Gibbon imagines himself as a neighbour in someone else's house for economy and for company. The house would need to be roomy and cheery with a well-educated husband and a wife who would not resemble Madame

481. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 328.

482. *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, op. cit., p. 196.

Pavillard, and Gibbon might furnish his own rooms for greater financial independence. Failing that, he might try the shores of Lake Neuchâtel, or - thinking of Rousseau to whom he has already referred in the letter⁴⁸³ - live amongst the good Savoyards of Chambéry, or enjoy the fine climate of southern France!

Such is the range of Gibbon's ideas in his quandary whilst, out of respect for his political friends, he is still considering a place as Commissioner of the Customs or Excise. Fortunately for him, Deyverdun replied promptly and decisively with his letter of 10th June.⁴⁸⁴ The house that he was living in was too large for himself alone and had been divided into two apartments, one for himself on the first floor and the other on the second for a family who would be leaving at the end of the summer. If Gibbon were to arrive in the autumn, he would be 'comme un Dieu dans une machine qui finit l'embroglio.' The force of such imagery is augmented with the challenging question: 'Eh! que voulez-vous consulter, si ce n'est votre cœur et votre raison?' The rebuff, recalling the words of his own letter of 20th May, reverberates in Gibbon's mind and, in his next letter of 24th June to Deyverdun,⁴⁸⁵ he reveals the strength of the influence of the opposition headed by the recently ennobled Holroyd:

Quels autres conseillers veux je prendre sinon mon cœur et ma raison? Il en est de puissans et toujours ecoutés, la paresse, les egards, la mauvaise honte. Tous mes amis ou soi-disant tels s'ecrieront que je suis un homme perdu, ruiné, un fou qui se derobe à ses protecteurs, un misanthrope qui s'exile au bout du monde...⁴⁸⁶

In addition there is the resistance of his aging relatives, his two aunts and

483. 'Votre pays est charmant, et malgré le degout de Jean Jacques, les moeurs et l'esprit de ses habitans me paroissent tres assortis aux bords du lac Leman.' (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 328.) Rousseau had renounced his citizenship of Geneva in 1763.

484. Add. Mss. 34,896. It has been printed with amendments in *Misc. Works*, Vol. II, pp. 280-9.

485. *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 332-9.

486. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

Heart and reason, as Deyverdun reckoned, would prevail, and they were sustained not only by friendship but also with the prospect of freedom from political duty, fewer financial worries and participation in Lausanne society. Deyverdun's letter of 10th June had gone into the details of the domestic arrangements at La Grotte, calculated to ensure the independence of their lives. He offered the prospect of small social gatherings rather than grand assemblies where foreigners, especially of the younger generation, were excluded unless they had merit or talent. Deyverdun allowed his imagination to run to visiting friends in the country in a hired cabriolet with a pair of horses, but he concluded with a serious challenge that could not fail to convince Gibbon:

Si dis-je vous exécutez ce plan, vous retrouverez une liberté et une indépendance, que vous n'auriez jamais dû perdre, et dont vous méritez de jouir, une aisance qui ne vous coûtera qu'un voyage de quelques jours, une tranquillité que vous ne pouvez avoir à Londres, et enfin un ami qui n'a peut-être pas été un jour sans penser à vous, et qui malgré ses défauts, ses foiblesses et son infériorité, est encore un des compagnons qui vous convient le mieux.⁴⁸⁸

Encouraged by such a whole-hearted response and the happy conjunction of events which would enable Gibbon to occupy a suite of eleven rooms on the second floor of Deyverdun's house,⁴⁸⁹ Gibbon in his letter of 24th June shows how much Lausanne and its society governed by women meant to him.

487. In his *Memoirs*, Gibbon was to summarize the opposing forces as 'the feelings of my heart, the indolence of my temper, and the opinion of the World, which unanimously condemned this voluntary banishment.' (p. 176.)

488. Add. Mss. 34,886.

489. In the Gibbon papers preserved in the Archives Cantonales Vaudoises at Lausanne, there is a plan of Gibbon's apartment by William de Sévery (folio 366 of 'Documents divers concernant Gibbon').

Je me rappelle depuis vint ou trente ans les moeurs l'esprit l'aisance de la société, et je comprends que ce véritable ton de la bonne compagnie se perpétue et s'épure de père en fils ou plutôt de mère en fille car il m'a toujours paru qu'à Lausanne aussi bien qu'en France les femmes sont très supérieures aux hommes.⁴⁹⁰

In spite of the practical problems of transporting his books and retaining a reliable valet, he is on the verge of deciding: '*je pars ou je reste.*' A week later,⁴⁹¹ he gives his word: 'JE PARS.'

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Gibbon had written the first forty-six chapters of *The Decline and Fall*.⁴⁹² It might seem strange that he should at this stage be willing to interrupt the progress of his work by distancing himself from his library, when he knew that much time and expense would be involved in furnishing himself in Switzerland with all the sources that he would need. He was under no illusions about the problems of transporting the whole of his library. In his letter of 24th June 1783⁴⁹³ to Deyverdun he discusses the question in a very dispassionate way:

Quant aux outils de mon travail, nous commencerions par examiner l'état de nos richesses, après quoi il faudroit un petit calcul du prix du poids et de la rareté de chaque ouvrage, pour juger de ce qu'il seroit nécessaire de transporter de Londres, et ce qu'on acheteroit plus commodément en Suisse...

In the language of a modern outward investment director, he regards the

490. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 333.

491. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 339.

492. Though not all the footnotes for Chapters XXXIX-XLVI were completed. This can be clearly seen in footnote 167 to Chapter XLIV where Gibbon refers to a custom applying to the lease of land which still prevailed 'in the beautiful and happy country where I am permitted to reside.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. IV, p. 526.) In a footnote to his discussion of the career of Boethius in Chapter XXXIX, there is a reference to a source not likely to have been available to Gibbon before his return to Switzerland: Sinner's Catalogue of manuscripts at the library of Berne. (*Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 215, footnote 110.)

493. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 335.

expenses involved as 'les avances d'une manufacture transplantée en pays étranger et qu'on espere de retirer dans la suite avec un profit raisonnable.' He knows that the library resources at Lausanne, even including the books of Loys de Bochat which had been moved after his death from La Grotte to the Academy, would not be sufficient for his purpose and hopes that he will be able to borrow books from the libraries of Berne and Basle.⁴⁹⁴ In spite of such deliberations, he must have known from his earlier experience of Lausanne that he was no further from the world of scholarship and of the Enlightenment in Switzerland than in London and that the seriousness of these considerations did not produce an insurmountable barrier to the prospect of completing his life's work on the shores of Lake Geneva.

The idea of completing *The Decline and Fall* in Lausanne may indeed have been a positive incentive for making the move from London. D. M. Low, Gibbon's biographer, noted a parallel to Gibbon's personal situation in his words about the Emperor Julian in Chapter XIX of *The Decline and Fall*:

Julian inviolably preserved for Athens that tender regard which seldom fails to arise in a liberal mind from the recollection of the place where it has discovered and exercised its growing powers.⁴⁹⁵

There is a similar sense of personal experience in a passage of *The Decline and Fall* about the early stages of the First Crusade, where, writing in Lausanne, he speculates on the motives of Pope Urban II, a native of France,

494. Deyverdun would be a useful intermediary in having friends who were able to borrow books from libraries too distant to visit. Sometimes the borrowing was rather surreptitious, as shown in the correspondence of a future Advoyer of Berne, M. F. Freudenreich, with Deyverdun, which General Meredith Read discovered at La Grotte and published in English translation in his *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy*: 'I lend myself quite willingly to the petty deceit which the managing committee of the library so well merits. I asked in my own name for the Father of the Church whom M. Gibbon wishes to tether. I will send it to you on Friday by the coach; but I beg M. Gibbon to take care of it and to keep my secret.' (Vol. II, p. 463.)

495. The quotation from *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II, p. 270, appears on p. 299 of Low's *Edward Gibbon, 1737-1794*, *op. cit.*

in adjourning the Council of Placentia and calling for a second synod at Clermont in 1095:

Nor is there perhaps a more exquisite gratification than to revisit, in a conspicuous dignity, the humble and laborious scenes of our (sic) youth.⁴⁹⁶

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Before his departure from London, Gibbon arranged for some of his most needed books, described as 'the tools of my historical manufacture,'⁴⁹⁷ to be posted ahead of him. In a letter of Monday, 18th August, Gibbon had told Sheffield:

this morning my books were shipped for Rouen, and will reach Lausanne almost as soon as myself. On Thursday morning the bulk of the library moves from Bentinck to Downing Street.⁴⁹⁸

Sheffield had provided a store room for Gibbon at his house in Downing Street. Plate, linen and furniture were also deposited there. Eventually many of the books and other possessions were transferred to Lausanne, when it became evident that transport by carriage was less expensive than the cost of new purchases in Switzerland. Gibbon arranged for some of the books to be sold, including French classics which he could easily repurchase in Switzerland. The books that were shipped in August were in two boxes (described in the letter of 1st September to William Robertson, as 'two immense Cases'). They were in fact delayed in Paris till the New Year and did not arrive in Lausanne until the beginning of February. Gibbon was so overjoyed on being able to consult them again that he did not complete a letter to Sheffield, which he had started on the 2nd February, until the

496. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VI, p.273.

497. Letter of 1st September 1783 to William Robertson, the historian. (*Letters*, Vol. II, p.360.)

498. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 354.

Twelve months after his arrival in Lausanne, Gibbon revealed the situation as to his books left in store in a letter of 26th September 1784 to Peter Elmsley, his bookseller:

With regard to the sale of my books the reasons for delay are much abated, I think I have extracted the needful, and the French Classics are already repurchased. I am much inclined to commit a discretionary trust to your faith and diligence; in your profession of a Bookseller you may indulge yourself like Kings or Statesmen in some latitude of Morals but in a private transaction of friendship there is no man on whom I more implicitly rely; I recollect your three modes of sale and believe that with proper attention the mysterious treaty with the booksellers will put them off to the best advantage.⁵⁰⁰

In the event, an independent valuation of the remaining books was made by another bookseller called Payne and that was approved by Elmsley, who offered to change the sum of pounds into guineas for Gibbon's benefit.

Gibbon wanted the money and was inclined to accept the offer, but evidently the disposal of such a treasure store was a difficult decision for him. He told Sheffield in October 1785 that he had decided to keep the remaining books - 'if not troublesome to Downing Street'⁵⁰¹ - until his next visit to England.

Later he was concerned that they came to no harm when he learnt that the Duchess of Gordon had become a tenant of the house.⁵⁰² During his visit from August 1787 to July 1788, the Sheffield family in fact returned to

499. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 399.

500. Elmsley had become quite a friend of Gibbon before his departure from London; in a letter of 1st October 1785 to Sheffield, Gibbon compared the social life of Lausanne with the loneliness that could be experienced in London when confined indoors with gout and remarked: 'I was proud and happy if I could prevail on Elmsley to enliven the dullness of the Evening.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 32.) In 1789, Gibbon urges Elmsley to send his views on politics in England: 'I sincerely assure you that I set the highest value on the observations of a cool, intelligent, impartial man who converses every day with all ranks of people from a Duke to a printer's devil.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 144.)

501. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 37.

502. Letter to Sheffield of 21st July 1787, when Gibbon was preparing to return to England for the publication of the last three volumes of *The Decline and Fall*: 'I have some anxiety about my books, and must try whether I can approach those holy relics without offending the delicacy of an amiable Duchess.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 66.)

their Downing Street house and Gibbon was after all able to stay there 'au milieu d'une nouvelle Bibliothèque.'⁵⁰³ The outcome of the saga of his books can be gathered from hurried letters to Sheffield from Downing Street on 14th June 1788: 'The casing of my books is a prodigious operation' and, a week later, 'seven Majestic boxes will abdicate on Monday your hall.'⁵⁰⁴ Once more in Lausanne, he could finally report to Elmsley:

The heavy baggage arrived safe and soon at Lausanne, and I now possess a respectable library of at least 6000 Volumes, superior to any in the Pays de Vaud, and more compleat and valuable than it formerly was in Bentinck street.⁵⁰⁵

The story of the delays in transporting a large part of his Bentinck Street library, while he was finishing *The Decline and Fall* in Lausanne, provides evidence of perhaps the main disadvantage for him in retiring from London; and the joy and relief at recovering the 'holy relicks' can be felt in his correspondence with Sheffield and Elmsley.⁵⁰⁶ Another disadvantage arose on Gibbon's arrival in Lausanne in September 1783. Nearly nine months passed before his accommodation at La Grotte was ready and before he could settle down to regular composition.⁵⁰⁷ In May 1784, he wrote to his stepmother in cheerful mood: 'I have seriously resumed the prosecution of my history; each day and each month adds something to the completion of the great work.'⁵⁰⁸ Gibbon may have been

503. Letter to Wilhelm de Sévery of 31st January 1788. (*Letters*, Vol. III, p. 94.)

504. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 109 & 111.

505. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 145.

506. Nothing could be further from the truth than G. M. Young's remark: 'When he migrated, two-thirds of his library was scrapped without the least concern.' (*Gibbon*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1948, p.144.)

507. There was a delay in the move of the family who were tenants of the upper floor at La Grotte. Another cause of interruption was a sprained ankle, as revealed by Gibbon to Sheffield in a letter of 30th September: 'The day after my arrival (Sunday) we had just finished a very temperate dinner, and intended to begin a round of visits on foot chapeau sous le bras, when most unfortunately Deyverdun proposed to shew me something in the Court, we boldly and successfully ascended a flight of stone steps, but in the descent I missed my footing, and strained or sprained my angle in a painful manner.' (*Letters*, Vol. II, p.373.)

508. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 412.

conscious that he had assured his friends in England that his move to Switzerland would not delay his work and therefore went out of his way to put the best light on his progress. Writing after completing his task it seemed that 'a full twelvemonth was lost before I could resume the thread of regular and daily industry.'⁵⁰⁹ This is closer to the impression that he gave to Lady Sheffield in his letter of 22nd October 1784, where he referred to the remainder of his history as 'an arduous work which does not proceed so fast as I expected amidst the avocations of Society and miscellaneous study.'⁵¹⁰

Yet such a note of doubt is only a passing moment of concern in Gibbon's letter to Lady Sheffield. He had begun his letter to her with the playful boast of the number of celebrities that he could 'enlarge and embellish without departing from truth,' with whom he had walked on 'our terrace' overlooking Lake Geneva.⁵¹¹ Far from retiring from the world to the society of a provincial town, as Lord Sheffield feared, he had immeasurably improved his prospects by returning to Lausanne to the house where he had visited the widow of Loys de Bochat as a young man and which was now the home of his friend. He revealed as much when he reported:

The chosen part of my library is now arrived and arranged in a room full as good as that in Bentinck Street, with this difference indeed that instead of looking on a stone Court twelve feet square I command from three windows of plate glass an unbounded prospect of many a league of vineyard, of fields, of wood, of lake, and of mountains, a

509. *Memoirs*, p. 179.

510. *Letters*, Vol. III, p. 14, where he predicts with remarkable accuracy that he will not complete the work for three or four years when, 'I shall infallibly return to England, about the month of May or June, and the necessary labour of printing with care two or three quarto Volumes will detain me till their publication, in the ensuing spring.'

511. His guests included Tissot, the Abbé Raynal, the Neckers with their daughter Germaine, who was already involved in marriage negotiations with the Baron de Staël, Prince Henry of Prussia and the Abbé de Bourbon, a natural son of Louis XV. (*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 9.)

scene which Lord S. will tell you, is superior to all you can imagine.⁵¹²

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In the next chapter, the effect of Gibbon's renewed residence in Lausanne on the composition of *The Decline and Fall* will be examined under two main heads: the influence of the notion of Swiss liberty that had inspired his *Swiss History*, and of the possible disadvantage of living in one country while writing in the language of another.

512. *Letters*, Vol. III, p. 12.

8 THE INFLUENCE OF SWITZERLAND ON *THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE*

*...in the three last [volumes], I may have been seduced by the facility of my pen, and the constant habit of speaking one language and writing another may have infused some mixture of Gallic idioms.*⁵¹³

In a belated bicentenary ceremony in January 1995 to commemorate the residence of Gibbon in Lausanne, the British Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation unveiled a plaque, on the outside of the main Post Office, which states that the major part of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was composed nearby. The colossal neo-classical building, which is the Post Office, was built at the end of the nineteenth century on part of the estate of La Grotte when the house was demolished. Though it is wrong to assert that more than half the work was written in Switzerland, there can be no doubt about the major influence of Switzerland on its composition.

In the previous chapters, it has been pointed out wherever relevant how Gibbon's early experience of Switzerland had its effect in the long term on ideas and attitudes of mind that were to be expressed in *The Decline and Fall*. Chapters 1 to 4 and 6 have shown that Gibbon's interest in the struggle for liberty and independence of the Swiss cantons against the continental empires of the successors of Charlemagne provided a continuing

⁵¹³. *Memoirs*, p. 179.

theme in his writings from the time of his 1755 tour of Switzerland with the Pavillards. His *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses* of 1767 included a notable emphasis on the connection between liberty, independence and industry and it was supported by his own experience of Switzerland, as well as by his reading of Montesquieu, Hume and Voltaire. Liberty and freedom are very often the issues which he discusses in *The Decline and Fall* when judging how far the Roman Empire had fallen below the ideals of the Roman Republic. In the following paragraphs, the continuing relevance of Switzerland's history for Gibbon when describing the evolution of the Roman Empire will be examined, separating the issues as far as possible into political, military and ecclesiastical subjects. It will be seen how frequently his knowledge of Switzerland influences the political and cultural assumptions in *The Decline and Fall*.

Gibbon was consistently opposed to projects of imperial expansion which depended on territorial aggrandisement. On a relatively small scale but very close to his own consciousness, Berne was a contemporary instance of imperial ambition retaining its power and control over a dependent territory. The Pays de Vaud, which in 1723 had failed to respond to the patriotism of Major Davel, as recalled by Gibbon in *The Letter on the Government of Berne*, continued to be subject to "Their Excellencies", the governors of Berne. Until the threat of the French Revolution gave a new perspective to this dominion, Gibbon remained critical of the political ambitions of Berne, believing its bourgeoisie to have retained their own policies and taste for conquests within the Confederation. In contrast, he

held a lasting appreciation of the industrial enterprise of Zurich.⁵¹⁴

Writing of the attempts of the tenth century German emperors to assert their power over Italy, Gibbon remarks in Chapter XLIX of *The Decline and Fall*:

There is nothing perhaps more adverse to nature and reason than to hold in obedience remote countries and foreign nations, in opposition to their inclination and interest.⁵¹⁵

In more recent centuries, the conventional examples of imperial policy on a continental scale were the ambitious militarism of the Emperor Charles V and of Louis XIV, while at the end of his own lifetime the expansion of revolutionary France after 1789 opposed another threat to his ideal of political balance. This ideal was expressed in Chapter III of *The Decline and Fall* in terms of a 'division of Europe into a number of independent states, connected, with each other, by the general resemblance of religion, language and manners,' producing 'the most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind.'⁵¹⁶ The Swiss cantons can be seen as representing this ideal in miniature.

514. However, he did not allow his personal relationship with individuals to be affected by this antithesis. Gibbon's friendship, for example, with the Bernois, Gabriel Erlach, the Bailiff of Lausanne from 1787 to 1793, developed from their taste for cards at receptions at the Château. Gibbon gave him an Italian translation of *The Decline and Fall* and Erlach wrote to M. de Sévery 'quoique j'eusse une haute opinion de cet ouvrage, il surpassa infiniment tout ce que j'en pensais et je ne balance pas, quant à moi, à donner à M. Gibbon la première place parmi les historiens modernes...' When he heard from the de Sévery family of Gibbon's death he replied: 'j'aimais Gibbon de tout mon cœur et il était impossible de ne pas l'aimer beaucoup, quand on était parvenu à obtenir son amitié...' (M. et Mme William de Sévery's *La Vie de Société dans le Pays de Vaud à la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle*, Vol. II, p. 52 and p. 69.) As to the Italian translation of *The Decline and Fall*, it appears that only the first forty chapters were available in Gibbon's lifetime (Norton, *Gibbon's Bibliography*, op. cit., pp. 130-4), but Gibbon regarded it as 'superior' to the French, which was also incomplete. (*Memoirs*, p. 194.)

515. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p.322.

516. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p.89. In the ensuing paragraph, Gibbon imagines 'the safe and dreary prison' the Roman Empire would become for a political dissident, reduced to be 'the slave of Imperial despotism,' since there was no escape from the universal tyranny of a single person. In contrast, 'A modern tyrant, who should find no resistance either in his own breast or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of present censure, the advice of his allies, and the apprehension of his enemies.'

Charles V with his motto - "plus ultra" - was for Gibbon the personification of tyranny opposed to political balance.⁵¹⁷ He is reminded of him and his methods, for example, when he describes the sack of Rome by Alaric. He believes that the Goths were less destructive than the troops of Charles the Fifth, whom he calls 'a Catholic prince, who styled himself Emperor of the Romans.'⁵¹⁸ It was natural for Gibbon to recall his abdication when he considers the abdication of Diocletian and he refers to the 'striking resemblance' of their characters, 'whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art.'⁵¹⁹

The history of Switzerland in the fifteenth century had provided Gibbon with another notable example of a prince who had aspired to territorial aggrandisement, namely the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold. He had threatened the independence of other nations including the emergent Swiss.⁵²⁰ When Gibbon has occasion to prescribe the necessary qualities to resist such tyranny in *The Decline and Fall*, it is remarkable how similar the recipe is to the ingredients of the Swiss Constitution long familiar to him.

A martial nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against enterprises of an aspiring prince.⁵²¹

517. John Robertson in his essay, 'Gibbon's Roman Empire as a universal monarchy: the *Decline and fall* and the imperial idea in early modern Europe' in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, *op. cit.*, has discussed the special significance of Charles V in the development of the concept of 'universal monarchy.' (pp. 250-2.)

518. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. III, p. 347.

519. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp.415-6.

520. Gibbon had described him as 'le Prince a la fois le plus puissant, le plus ambitieux et le plus guerrier de son Siecle' in his *Journal de mon voyage*. (*Miscellanea*, p. 13.)

521. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 65, where Gibbon's argument is concerned with the removal of constitutional barriers to the ambition of the early Roman Emperors. 'The republicans of spirit had perished in the field of battle, or in the proscription.'

The references to a standing militia and to common assemblies are more suggestive of the constitutional practices of the Swiss cantons than of Britain, and his awareness of the Swiss situation is more influential than his experience of the South Hampshire regiment.

Such a fixed opposition to the idea of territorial aggrandisement raises questions about Gibbon's position as an Englishman who had resisted the secession of the American colonies as a junior member of Lord North's administration and it seems necessary at this point to consider briefly Gibbon's attitude to British policy and whether it was affected by his regard for the Swiss love of liberty. Gibbon did not lose his sense of patriotism, when he chose to reside in Switzerland,⁵²² and he believed the British Empire to be of a different nature from the Spanish or French. As early in British history as the revolt of Carausius against Roman rule in the third century, Gibbon regarded Britain as assuming 'its natural and respectable station of a maritime power.'⁵²³ This belief was a commonly held one in England in the eighteenth century, expressed in the writings on commerce and on the balance of power of Charles Davenant at the beginning of the century, which were reissued by Sir Charles Whitworth in 1771. As a maritime power without a standing army, the British Empire was considered to be of a beneficent form, concerned with commerce rather than conquest, and able with the aid of allies to intervene against a

522. In the preface to Volume IV of *The Decline and Fall*, published in 1788 when he had returned to England for a period of nearly eleven months, Gibbon wrote with self-interest and sincerity equally evident: 'I shall soon revisit the banks of Lausanne, a country which I have known and loved from my early youth. Under a mild government, amidst a beautiful landscape, in a life of leisure and independence, and among a people of easy and elegant manners, I have enjoyed, and may again hope to enjoy, the varied pleasures of retirement and society. But I shall ever glory in the name and character of an Englishman: I am proud of my birth in a free and enlightened country; and the approbation of that country is the best and most honourable reward of my labours.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. xlv.)

523. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 386.

dominating military power in Europe and secure a balance of power, as had been achieved in 1713 and 1763. This was the prevailing view developed by Gibbon in the *Mémoire Justificatif*, which in 1779 was commissioned from him by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State, following the French treaty of friendship with the American rebels. In his appeal to the independent judgement of Europe - 'Ce tribunal, composé des hommes éclairés et désintéressés de toutes les nations'⁵²⁴ - Gibbon defends Britain's maritime policy as follows:

Le roi ne prétend pas régner en tyran sur toutes les mers, mais il sait que les forces maritimes ont fait dans tous les siècles la sûreté et la gloire de ses états; et qu'elles ont souvent contribué à protéger la liberté de l'Europe contre la puissance ambitieuse qui a si longtems travaillé à l'asservir.⁵²⁵

Gibbon 'spoke as a lawyer from [his] brief,'⁵²⁶ but there is no suggestion in the *Memoirs* or his correspondence that he had personal doubts about the justification of Britain's maritime strength. Closely involved as he was with Britain's imperial policies through his responsibilities at the Board of Trade and through ties of friendship, Gibbon was loyal, though he can be charged with being somewhat detached from contemporary problems of Empire, such as the effect of British rule in Ireland.⁵²⁷ At the same time, he was confident that the balance of power was sustainable in Europe with its

twelve powerful, though unequal, kingdoms, three respectable commonwealths, and a variety of smaller, though independent,

524. *Misc. Works*, Vol. V, p. 1.

525. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 14.

526. *Memoirs*, p. 173.

527. Robertson has noted in his essay, 'Gibbon's Roman Empire as a universal monarchy: the *Decline and fall* and the imperial idea in early modern Europe' in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, *op. cit.*, that as the friend of Lord Sheffield, who was closely involved with Ireland's commercial and constitutional position in the early 1780's, Gibbon was relatively uninterested in problems of the British Empire. (p. 249.) Norton has listed the references to the principal events of the War of American Independence in Gibbon's correspondence; they are valuable for their reminder of the interval of six weeks or more before news of events reached London, but Gibbon's comments do not include any remarkable prognosis of the possible outcome of the conflict. (Appendix IV to *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 417-21.)

For Gibbon, Switzerland, in its self-defence and as a supplier of mercenaries, would be a major element in that balance as one of the 'respectable commonwealths'.

Before leaving the subject of universal monarchy as a theme of opprobrium for Gibbon, it is relevant to note that he regarded the conquests of the Arabs in the four and a half centuries after the death of Mohammed as an assertion of 'a divine and indefeasible claim of universal empire', which gave justice to the cause of the Crusades had they been conducted with more moderation.⁵²⁹ Gibbon's attitude to Mohammedanism can be sometimes remarkably tolerant, as when he writes:

More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the gospel.⁵³⁰

Nevertheless, the Moslem Empire was another example of the debilitating effect of over-extended territorial powers, in which the civil and religious policies limit the intellectual freedom of individuals. The Roman Empire had already provided him with several occasions in *The Decline and Fall* to lament the decline of literary and artistic prowess under the Emperors.⁵³¹

^{528.} *Decline and Fall*, Vol. IV, p. 178. Craddock has established that the *General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West*, forming the tailpiece to Chapter XXXVIII, from which this quotation is taken, was a revision of 'an overview to the history' composed in the early 1770's. (Edward Gibbon, *Luminous Historian 1772-1794*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.)

^{529.} *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VI, p. 277.

^{530.} *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 517. He also compares the seventh-century Christians' worship of saints and their concern with the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation which 'appear to contradict the principle of the divine unity' with the 'glorious testimony to the unity of God' in the Koran (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 361.)

^{531.} Notably towards the end of his review of the state of the Empire in the age of the Antonines in Chapter II, where he concludes: 'The name of Poet was almost forgotten; that of Orator was usurped by the sophists. A cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning, and the decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p.63.)

When Gibbon examined Constantine's reasons for accepting Christianity as the state religion, he found that, whereas in antiquity legislators had relied on the support of educated opinion, 'every principle which had once maintained the vigour and purity of Rome and Sparta was long since extinguished in a declining and despotic empire.'⁵³² Much later, he regrets that the Moslems of the eighth and ninth centuries had not learnt to read the Greek and Latin texts of antiquity in their original form.⁵³³

The vigour of community life, which was generally missing in extensive territorial empires, Gibbon usually discovered in new and comparatively small societies, even though they might at first be unlettered, as were the German tribes in the time of Tacitus. In time that vigour would result in new nations, with new languages and new political institutions, which Gibbon called "the genius of Europe."⁵³⁴ Typical of that ability to recreate a sense of independence was that shown by the Anglo-Saxons and also, more recently, by the Swiss cantons.

Switzerland was a model of resistance to empires and its history demonstrated how a nation can arm itself to defend its independence, without losing its regional differences and sense of individual freedoms. One of the attractions in the larger Swiss towns that Gibbon visited with the

⁵³². *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II, p. 312.

⁵³³. After describing in Chapter LII the significant progress made by the Arabs in the sciences, Gibbon continues, with the undimmed enthusiasm for the literature of antiquity displayed in his *Essai*, '... the Moslems deprived themselves of the principal benefits of a familiar intercourse with Greece and Rome, the knowledge of antiquity, the purity of taste, and the freedom of thought ... the temperate dignity of style, the graceful proportions of art, the forms of visible and intellectual beauty, the just delineation of character and passion, the rhetoric of narrative and argument, the regular fabric of epic and dramatic poetry ... The philosophers of Athens and Rome enjoyed the blessings, and asserted the rights, of civil and religious freedom. Their moral and political writings might have gradually unlocked the fetters of Eastern despotism, diffused a liberal spirit of enquiry and toleration, and encouraged the Arabian sages to suspect that their caliph was a tyrant and their prophet an impostor.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. VI, pp. 34-5.)

⁵³⁴. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 63.

Pavillards in 1755 was the arsenal where the strength of the armoury of the town was displayed to general view.⁵³⁵ There he saw rows and rows of helmets, suits of armour, bucklers and halberds of the Swiss militia. In his comparison of the arsenals of Berne and Zurich, Gibbon could not decide which had the more weapons but he was certain that the Swiss were the best armed nation in the world. Apart from the arsenals with arms for as many as 40,000 men, there was further evidence of the continuing commitment of the Swiss to national service in the fact recorded by Gibbon that, before a man could marry, he had to carry a certificate signed by the minister of his place that he had the arms and full equipment of a foot-soldier.⁵³⁶ When Gibbon wrote in his *Swiss History* of the decisive battle of Morgarten of 1315, he described the versatility and penetration of the Swiss infantry as follows:

Accoutumés à poursuivre le chamois sur les bords glissants des précipices, ils couroient d'un pas assuré au milieu des neiges. Ils étoient armés de ces grosses et pesantes hallebardes auxquelles le fer le mieux trempé ne résistoit point.⁵³⁷

Their superiority over their less agile mounted opponents in the defile between mountain and lake was so great that for a long time afterwards 'l'on s'appercevoit dans toute les provinces voisines que l'élite de la noblesse avoit péri dans cette fatale journée.'⁵³⁸

Alongside his own experience as commander of the Hampshire militia, Gibbon knew the continuing worth of the Swiss foot soldiers, whom

535. Gibbon illustrated the political advantage of public display of armouries with an incident in the history of Neuchâtel. In the *Journal de mon voyage*, he related how the Governor appointed by the King of Prussia performed the ceremony of opening all the gates of the château every year for twelve magistrates to inspect all the rooms. This was because one of the former princes had once concealed a large quantity of arms without the knowledge of the citizens to secure his control over the city. (*Miscellanea*, pp. 14-5.)

536. See footnote 48 above.

537. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, pp. 277-8.

538. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 278.

he had seen exercising at Lausanne.⁵³⁹ He was not likely to underrate the importance of the Roman infantry in the defence of the Roman Empire and at the end of Chapter XXVII of *The Decline and Fall*, when he reviewed the situation of the Empire after the death of Theodosius in AD 395, on the eve of the invasions of the Goths and the Huns, he gave the decline of its discipline and strength special significance as a direct cause of the fall of the Empire. No longer could the heavily armed Roman infantry be relied upon to withstand the barbarian cavalry:

The relaxation of discipline, and the disuse of exercise, rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armour, which they seldom wore; and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum, which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands...their pusillanimous indolence may be considered as the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire.⁵⁴⁰

Gibbon's belief in the Swiss infantry as the cause and continuing support of Swiss independence lay behind this judgement.

The military power of the Roman Empire did not have the virtue of being a citizen force. As Gibbon well knew,

the exercise of arms may be an occasional duty or a separate trade; and it is this difference which forms the distinction between a militia and a standing army.⁵⁴¹

The professional soldiers of the Roman Empire were supposed to defend its frontiers but were often used for political purposes. Gibbon wrote of the Prætorian Guards at the end of the second century: 'The power of the sword is more sensibly felt in an extensive monarchy than in a small

539. See footnote 385 above.

540. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. III, p. 197.

541. *Memoirs*, p. 107.

community.'⁵⁴² The freedom and independence to be found within smaller communities was associated in his mind with the active virtues of citizens participating in the counsels of state and in the defence of the realm. The history of the Swiss cantons with their communal assemblies and militias fitted that ideal of the free republic, in which all the citizens have status and property at stake. All Swiss males, other than the disabled and those excused by their profession, were trained to defend their country, whereas in Britain the militia was less comprehensive with recruitment by lot and substitution was allowed.⁵⁴³ So close is Gibbon's political philosophy to the Swiss ideal that he might have been writing of the Swiss cantons when he begins his account of the military condition of the Roman Empire in the age of the Antonines:

In the purer ages of the commonwealth, the use of arms was reserved for those ranks of citizens who had a country to love, a property to defend, and some share in exacting those laws which it was their interest, as well as duty, to maintain.⁵⁴⁴

When he wrote of the state of Germany before the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire, he would have had the Swiss cantons in mind, as much as the Anglo-Saxon world, in making the observation:

The most civilized nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany, and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners.⁵⁴⁵

The origin of the Swiss Confederation could also have been the cause for the reflection in his introduction to the subsequent discussion of the popular assemblies of ancient Germany: 'Civil governments, in their first

⁵⁴² *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 113.

⁵⁴³ *Memoirs*, pp. 108-10; cf. footnote 124 above.

⁵⁴⁴ *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 10.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 230.

institutions, are voluntary associations for mutual defence.'⁵⁴⁶

A specific example of the presence of Switzerland in his mind is seen when he introduces the Franks as one of the main invaders of the Roman Empire in the middle of the third century:

The league of the Franks may admit of some comparison with the Helvetic body; in which every canton, retaining its independent sovereignty, consults with its brethren in the common cause, without acknowledging the authority of any supreme head or representative assembly.⁵⁴⁷

Gibbon gives as his source for this comparison Simler's *De Republica Helvetiorum* which he had at Bentinck Street and in Lausanne and to which he refers several times in the footnotes to the first chapter of his *Swiss History*. He follows the comparison in *The Decline and Fall* with an observation on the difference in the character of the two nations: the Swiss wars of liberation have led to a peace of two hundred years, the reward of wise and honest policy, whereas the Franks had shown an 'inconstant spirit, the thirst of rapine, and a disregard to the most solemn treaties.'⁵⁴⁸ Gibbon might have added that the military spirit of the Swiss had in the main been siphoned into the service of states abroad and had not been allowed to cause discord within the Confederation.

The ecclesiastical history of the Swiss provided Gibbon with further references in *The Decline and Fall* to their independent spirit and love of freedom. He alludes, in his discussion of the emergence of bishops as presidents of the early Christian Church in Chapter XV, to the radicalism of

⁵⁴⁶. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 242.

⁵⁴⁷. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 275.

⁵⁴⁸. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 275.

Swiss protestants at the time of the Reformation:

After we have passed the difficulties of the first century, we find the episcopal government universally established, till it was interrupted by the republican genius of the Swiss and German reformers.⁵⁴⁹

He compares the zeal with which both the Catholic and Protestant Churches during the Reformation and afterwards damned their opponents; with the exceptional attitude of the leading Swiss reformer:

Zuinglius is perhaps the only leader of a party who has ever adopted the milder sentiment, and he gave no less offence to the Lutherans than to the Catholics.⁵⁵⁰

It was natural for Gibbon to think of Zwingli of Zurich as the representative of the Reformation in Switzerland rather than Calvin, the Frenchman, whose centre of influence at Geneva was still outside the Confederation. Zwingli's name comes first, before Luther and Calvin, as 'deliverers of nations.'⁵⁵¹

In a monarchy, the term used by Gibbon to describe the rule of 'the single person', whether it was a Roman Emperor, a religious prophet, Charles V of Spain or Louis XIV of France, the role of the Church is seen in *The Decline and Fall* more often as the support of the state than the defender of the rights of the individual.⁵⁵² In contrast, he regarded the conversion of pagans by St. Columban and St. Gall in the seventh century in an area which was to become the nucleus of the Swiss canton of St. Gallen,

549. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. II, p. 45, footnote 114.

550. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 28, footnote 72.

551. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 130.

552. Examples of this belief of Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall* include his remark in the discussion of monarchy at the beginning of Chapter III: 'The influence of the clergy, in an age of superstition, might be usefully employed to assert the rights of mankind; but so intimate is the connexion between the throne and the altar, that the banner of the church has been seen very seldom on the side of the people.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 65); and the memorable image, borrowed from Voltaire's *La Pucelle*, in Chapter XX, of Constantine I using 'the altars of the church as a convenient footstool to the throne of the empire.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 325.)

as having led to the founding of 'an ecclesiastical principality and a populous city, the seat of freedom and commerce.'⁵⁵³

For Gibbon, the character of the Swiss nation in its origin and development had helped to make a virtue of republicanism, as the philosophy of Cicero⁵⁵⁴ and the veneration of classical antiquity of the Enlightenment had caused him to extol the achievements of the Roman Republic at the expense of the Roman Empire. The references to Swiss history and national character in several of the chapters of *The Decline and Fall* illustrate this lasting influence on his political philosophy, balancing his love of order with a concern for the liberty of the individual and freedom of expression, and the belief that from these originate the benefits of industry and commerce.

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Gibbon himself was aware of the possibly ambivalent influence of another aspect of Swiss culture on the later volumes of his *History*. In the *Memoirs* he succinctly expresses the influence of spoken language in his critical assessment of his work:

The style of the first Volume is in my opinion somewhat crude and elaborate: in the second and third it is ripened into ease correctness and numbers: but in the three last, I may have been seduced by the facility of my pen; and the constant habit of speaking one language and writing another may have infused some mixture of Gallic

⁵⁵³. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. IV, p. 449, footnote 83, where Gibbon assumes the reader will know that he is referring to the prosperous linen manufacturing town of St. Gallen, whereas the unwary reader might be misled by the mention of Zug in the same footnote. This is an indication that Gibbon added this note to Chapter XLIII after his move to Lausanne.

⁵⁵⁴. In recalling his reading of Cicero's epistles, orations and treatises during his first residence in Lausanne, Gibbon made his all-embracing compliment to Cicero: 'I tasted the beauties of language, I breathed the spirit of freedom, and I imbibed from his precepts and examples the public and private sense of a man.' (*The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon, op. cit.*, pp. 232-3.)

The objectivity of this assessment has a breathtaking conclusiveness which can mislead. Gibbon's self-criticism can be unjust at times, as already noted in Chapter 6 in his dismissal of any literary value in his *Swiss History*. The attentive reader might well feel, in contrast with Gibbon's judgement of the first volume, that the narration of the succession of reigns of the emperors from Commodus to Constantine, culminating in the account of the rise and persecution of Christianity in Chapters XV and XVI, is lacking not in style but, rather, in an earlier account in similar detail of the reigns of the emperors from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius.⁵⁵⁶ Although the form and content of those final chapters of Volume One gave much trouble to Gibbon,⁵⁵⁷ as well as to Christian zealots, it is difficult to detect a style that is at odds with the material or tone of the discussion. Rather there is delight and wonder at the way Gibbon leads us into his secular view of early Christian practices. But more relevant to the subject of the Swiss influence on *The Decline and Fall* is the idea that the language of the later chapters suffers from Gallicisms.

To begin with, it has to be recognised that Gibbon was by no means alone in his concern about the effect of the pervasive influence of French on the English language. Johnson in the preface to his *Dictionary* had written:

555. *Memoirs*, p.179.

556. Gibbon, himself, was aware of this omission: in a manuscript note to the opening paragraph of his copy of *The Decline and Fall*, he wrote: 'Should I not have given the history of that fortunate period which was interposed between two Iron ages? Should I not have deduced the decline of the Empire from the Civil Wars, that ensued after the fall of Nero or even from the tyranny which succeeded the reign of Augustus? Alas! I should: but of what avail is this tardy knowledge? Where error is irretrievable, repentance is useless.' (*The English Essays of Edward Gibbon*, edited by Patricia B. Craddock, Oxford, 1972, p. 338.)

557. *Memoirs*, p. 156: '... the fifteenth and sixteenth Chapters have been reduced by three successive revisals from a large Volume to their present size; and they might still be compressed without any loss of facts or sentiments.'

Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original Teutonic character, and deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it...⁵⁵⁸

Gibbon may have been mindful also of a further remark from that source:

he that has long cultivated another language will find its words and combinations crowd upon his memory; and haste or negligence, refinement or affectation, will obtrude borrowed terms and exotic expressions.⁵⁵⁹

Gibbon's use of words and his phraseology in *The Decline and Fall* may be examined closely in order to provide a glossary for the general reader of terms used with a meaning that sometimes differs from modern usage. Such a glossary recently compiled, containing twenty items regularly used by Gibbon in his *History*,⁵⁶⁰ has only two that have their French meaning rather than their English, and that usage was not exceptional to Gibbon but was generally practised, as Johnson's *Dictionary* shows. Throughout *The Decline and Fall*, Gibbon sometimes uses "prevent" when he means "anticipate" or "pre-empt", as when the French use "prévenir" in such phrases as 'prévenir les besoins de quelqu'un', and he uses "intestine" when he means "internal", as in 'intestine discord.' The differences listed in such a glossary are those, therefore, resulting mainly from changes in use in English since Gibbon's time rather than from his use of Gallicisms that would have disconcerted contemporary readers.

The presence of Gallicisms may elude the modern reader because of the further problem of detecting the example that would appear to be a

558. Samuel Johnson, *The Oxford Authors*, edited by Donald Greene, 1986, p. 319.

559. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

560. This list has been published in a new abridgement of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, edited by Antony Lentin and myself, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1998, p. xvii.

Gallicism in the eighteenth century which would no longer appear to be so to-day. Johnson's definition of "Gallicism" in his *Dictionary* is of contemporary assistance here; it emphasises a special use of the word "held":

A mode of speech peculiar to the French language: such as, he *figured* in controversy; he *held* this conduct; he *held* the same language that another had *held* before: with many other expressions to be found in the pages of *Bolingbroke*.⁵⁶¹

Gibbon might be committing this solecism in Chapter XLIX of *The Decline and Fall* when writing about the restoration of images in the Eastern Empire: 'the idols, for such they were now held, were secretly cherished...' ⁵⁶² He might also have the idea of "tenir" in the verb chosen for his comment on Charlemagne being the originator of tithes: 'Such obligations have (sic) country gentlemen to his memory!' ⁵⁶³ His use of "attempered" rather than "moderated" in a sentence about the Arab tribes in Chapter L: 'But the spirit of rapine and revenge was attempered by the milder influence of trade and literature' ⁵⁶⁴ - seems rather affected and may have been suggested to him by the regular use of "tempérer" in Lausanne society. When describing the Arab invasion of Spain in Chapter LI he refers to the town of Xeres being "illustrated" by the decisive encounter of two armies, again suggestive of the French equivalent verb, meaning to render illustrious. ⁵⁶⁵

These examples amount to very little evidence of extensive use of Gallicisms in the chapters of *The Decline and Fall* written in Lausanne, in spite of Gibbon's self-criticism on this score. A modern scholar, H. L. Bond in his study of the language of *The Decline and Fall*, found no reason to

⁵⁶¹. Volume I of the sixth edition of 1785.

⁵⁶². *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 295.

⁵⁶³. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 305, footnote 106.

⁵⁶⁴. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 346.

⁵⁶⁵. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 506.

discuss the question of Gallicisms.⁵⁶⁶ There is, however, one notable exception for modern eyes and that is Gibbon's adherence to the French practice of calling the founder of the Moslem religion, Mahomet. In Chapter L, when Gibbon begins his life of the prophet, he is aware of an alternative: 'Mahomet, or more properly Mohammed, the only son of Abdallah, was born at Mecca, four years after the death of Justinian...' ⁵⁶⁷ He seems to sense that, if he follows his Latin sources, he will be closer to what has become the English practice, but it would appear that he felt custom required him to follow the language of Voltaire, whose play, *Mahomet*, as well as his historical writings on the Moslem era were familiar to him.⁵⁶⁸ Other writers in French, whom he used as his authorities, included Gagnier⁵⁶⁹ and there were many precedents for the use of "Mahomet" in English literature.⁵⁷⁰ Johnson himself used the adjective, "Mahometan", in the preface to his *Dictionary*. Gibbon's final comment on this issue in *The Decline and Fall* is in a postscript to the preface of the fourth volume, written in Downing Street on 1st May 1788, where he says: 'The prophet Mohammed can no longer be stripped of the famous, though improper appellation of Mahomet.'⁵⁷¹

For the subject of the first chapter of *The Decline and Fall* to be

566. *The Literary Art of Edward Gibbon*, Oxford, 1960.

567. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 356.

568. Gibbon had Voltaire's play in mind when he was writing the footnotes to Chapter L and chastises the playwright for his bias against Mohammed. The maxim used by Voltaire: 'celui qui fait la guerre à sa patrie au nom de Dieu est capable de tout' is, in Gibbon's opinion, 'neither charitable nor philosophic; and some reverence is surely due to the fame of heroes and the religions of nations.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 391, footnote 150.)

569. John Gagnier, 1670-1740, a Frenchman by birth, was Professor of Oriental Languages at Oxford. In reviewing the evidence for the history of Mohammed, Gibbon describes him as 'the best and most authentic of our guides.' (Footnote 119 to Chapter L, Vol. V, p. 375.) Gibbon owned his *La Vie de Mahomet*, in two volumes, published at Amsterdam in 1748. (Keynes.)

570. Gibbon had, for example, in his library at Lausanne, Dean Prideaux's *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet*, London, 1718. (Keynes.)

571. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. xviii.

composed at Lausanne, which would be the final one of Volume IV of the finished work, Gibbon returned to ecclesiastical history. From the victories and triumph of Heraclius, Gibbon moved in Chapter XLVII to the doctrine of the Incarnation and the evolution of Christianity in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. A broader sweep for a discussion of theological issues was more convenient for the historian separated from his library in London,⁵⁷² and the evidence of the footnotes reveals that Gibbon has relied on four main sources for his discussion of the doctrines. These were the works of Petavius or Petau, the Jesuit whose *Dogmatica Theologica* Gibbon describes as 'a work of incredible labour and compass;' the Arminian, Le Clerc; the Huguenot, Beausobre; and the Lutheran, Mosheim.⁵⁷³ These were authorities whom Gibbon had already used extensively in earlier chapters on the growth of Christianity and on the Arian Controversy, whose volumes he might borrow from the library of the Academy at Lausanne.⁵⁷⁴

Gibbon is so familiar with this background material that he could indulge in an expansive discussion of the origin and history of the doctrine

572. The books, which he called 'the tools of my historical manufacture' in the letter, already cited, to William Robertson and which filled 'two immense Cases', did not arrive in Lausanne, as noted in the previous chapter, until four and a half months after his own journey to Lausanne.

573. In the first of the footnotes to Chapter XLVII, Gibbon wrote: 'If I persist in supporting each fact or reflection by its proper and special evidence, every line would demand a string of testimonies, and every note would swell to a critical dissertation. But the numberless passages of antiquity which I have seen with my own eyes are compiled, digested, and illustrated by *Petavius* and *Le Clerc*, by *Beausobre* and *Mosheim*. I shall be content to fortify my narrative by the names and characters of these respectable guides.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 103.) See footnote 430 above for Mosheim.

574. In the *Memoirs*, p. 179, Gibbon wrote of the early months of composition in Lausanne, 'A number of books, most requisite and least common had been previously selected: the Academical library of Lausanne which I could use as my own, contains at least the fathers and councils, and I have derived some occasional succour from the public collections of Bern, and Geneva.' The 'previously selected' books were probably those shipped in the 'two immense Cases'. A letter to Sheffield of 23rd September 1783, posted from Langres in France, shows that he read Homer and Clarendon's *Life* on the journey. (*Letters*, Vol. II, p.371.)

of the Incarnation.⁵⁷⁵ He refers in the *Memoirs* to terminating soon the fourth volume with 'an abstract of the controversies of the Incarnation.'⁵⁷⁶ One would not expect to see a change of idiom, immediately after his move to Switzerland, but there is a sense of freedom and of an expanded imagination at play as Gibbon discusses in figurative language the intricacies of the controversy. He imagines the sufferings of the participants :

a secret and incurable discord was cherished between those who were most apprehensive of confounding, and those who were most fearful of separating, the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Impelled by religious frenzy, they fled with adverse haste from the error which they mutually deemed most destructive of truth and salvation. On either hand they were anxious to guard, they were jealous to defend, the union and the distinction of the two natures, and to invent such forms of speech, such symbols of doctrine, as were least susceptible of doubt or ambiguity. The poverty of ideas and language tempted them to ransack art and nature for every possible comparison and each comparison misled their fancy in the explanation of an incomparable mystery. In the polemic microscope an atom is enlarged to a monster, and each party was skilful to exaggerate the absurd or impious conclusions that might be extorted from the principles of their adversaries. To escape from each other, they wandered through many a dark and devious thicket, till they were astonished by the horrid phantoms of Cerinthus and Apollinaris,⁵⁷⁷ who guarded the opposite issues of the theological labyrinth. As soon as they beheld the twilight of sense and heresy, they started, measured back their steps, and were again involved in the gloom of impenetrable orthodoxy. To purge themselves from the guilt or reproach of damnable error, they disavowed their consequences, explained their principles, excused their indiscretions, and unanimously pronounced the sounds of concord and faith. Yet a latent and almost invisible spark still lurked among the embers of controversy: by the breath of prejudice and passion, it was quickly kindled to a mighty flame, and the verbal disputes of the Oriental sects have shaken the pillars of the church and state.⁵⁷⁸

575. Gibbon's account of the doctrine of the Incarnation occurs on pp. 103-114 of Volume V of *The Decline and Fall*, stating his purpose on p. 103 to be: 'It is my design to comprise in the present chapter a religious war of two hundred years, to represent the ecclesiastical and political schism of the Oriental sects, and to introduce their clamorous or sanguinary contests by a modest enquiry into the doctrines of the primitive church.'

576. In a note to this passage, Gibbon shows he is proud to have published an account of the controversies which Dean Prideaux (1648-1724) had "durst not...in so wanton and lewd an age." (*Memoirs*, pp. 179 and 191.)

577. Theologians, described by Gibbon as Cerinthus of Asia, who confessed the double nature of Christ, and Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea, who proclaimed the one incarnate nature of Christ.

578. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, pp.113-4.

Gibbon is writing as if he is free, for at least a while, from the detail of his sources.

Such language recalls Hume's description of Gibbon's style in his Swiss History.

Your use of the French tongue has...led you into a style more poetical and figurative, and more highly coloured, than our language seems to admit of in historical productions: for such is the practice of French writers, particularly the more recent ones, who illuminate their pictures more than custom will permit us.⁵⁷⁹

This effect of the spoken rather than the written word may have been in Gibbon's mind when he wrote in his *Memoirs* of the infusion of Gallic idioms. The metaphors of the passage on the doctrine of the Incarnation also recall the remark of the Cambridge Greek scholar, Richard Porson, that 'sometimes in his attempts at elegance he loses sight of English, and sometimes of sense.'⁵⁸⁰ This stricture was contained in Porson's *Letters to Mr Archdeacon Travis* (1790), which Gibbon regarded as 'the most acute and accurate piece of Criticism which has appeared since the days of Bentley.'⁵⁸¹ A German historiographer noted similarly that Gibbon's 'research would be exemplary were he not led by his French education occasionally to strive for rhetorical effects that may obscure the truth.'⁵⁸² The rhetorical effects and more colourful imagery that contemporaries attributed to the influence of the French language might well explain what Gibbon meant by the infusion of Gallic idioms; a modern reader is more likely to appreciate the sense of relaxation and recreation in Gibbon's

579. Letter of 24th October 1767, printed in *Misc. Works*, Vol. I, pp. 204-5. See footnote 445 above.

580. Quoted by Bennett in his *Essays on Gibbon*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

581. *Memoirs*, p. 174.

582. D. L. Wachler in his *History of Historical Knowledge* (1820), quoted by Craddock in English in *Edward Gibbon, Luminous Historian*, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

imaginative writing.

Expansiveness of style and manner is a feature of *The Decline and Fall* after Gibbon's move to Switzerland. It is displayed in the greater length of his chapters. In Bury's edition of *The Decline and Fall*, Chapters XLVII to LI all exceed seventy pages, LI containing one hundred and two pages, being the longest of the work. These five chapters cover, in turn, the review of Christianity in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries; the summary of the Greek Emperors from the seventh to the end of the twelfth centuries; the introduction of images into the Christian church and the establishment of the German Empire in the West; the life of Mohammed; and the growth of the Moslem Empire in the seventh century. They are extensive subjects and Gibbon is broadening his canvas to achieve his objective of describing the decline of the Roman Empire in the east within his design of six volumes. Chapter XLVIII, in particular, is notable for its change of scale, reviewing the reigns of some sixty emperors⁵⁸³ over six hundred years, without the support of a single footnote. Here can be seen a conjunction of a change of scale as planned and a change of residence. It would not be justified to argue that a change of situation, including a temporary separation from some of the sources of information, is entirely responsible for the change in the form of composition, but situation and design are affecting each other, giving Gibbon added zest for a change of tempo in the orchestration of his several themes.

Gibbon explains the change of scale in the design of his History very

⁵⁸³. A figure which Gibbon justifies by including 'some female sovereigns, and deducting some usurpers who were never acknowledged in the capital, and some princes who did not live to possess their inheritance.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 258.)

precisely at the beginning of Chapter XLVIII, the first of the fourth volume and the second to be composed at Lausanne.

Five centuries of the decline and fall of the empire have already elapsed; but a period of more than eight hundred still separates me from the term of my labours, the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. Should I persevere in the same course, should I observe the same measure, a prolix and slender thread should be spun through many a volume, nor would the patient reader find an adequate reward of instruction or amusement.⁵⁸⁴

He accompanies this justification with a lighter step in introducing his subjects, reflecting a renewed zest for making progress, as when in Chapter L he begins his account of the advent of Mohammedanism:

After pursuing, above six hundred years, the fleeting Caesars of Constantinople and Germany, I now descend, in the reign of Heraclius, on the eastern borders of the Greek monarchy...and our eyes are curiously intent on one of the most memorable revolutions which have impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the globe.⁵⁸⁵

There is a gaiety of spirit in his confession:

As in this and the following chapter I shall display much Arabic learning, I must profess my total ignorance of the Oriental tongues, and my gratitude to the learned interpreters who have transfused their science into the Latin, French and English languages.⁵⁸⁶

It would be difficult to deny that some cause of this exhilaration was attributable to his new mode of living, but in addition there are signs and references to his changed situation and these will clearly indicate the stimulus of his new surroundings.

When he compares the life of a wandering Arab with his own or with his reader's, he thinks naturally of that of a private citizen of Europe, which of course is the status that he has acquired by accepting Deyverdun's offer to

584. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 180.

585. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 332.

586. *Ibid.*

share his house in Lausanne.⁵⁸⁷ When he wishes to compare the literary achievements of Charlemagne with the most elementary education provided in his own time, he thinks of the peasant of the Vaud.⁵⁸⁸ He feels safe at Lausanne to question the genealogy of Mohammed's descent from Ismael,⁵⁸⁹ and when he wishes to assess the prophet's vision of paradise, he reveals in contrast his own happiness at Lausanne.⁵⁹⁰ Indeed he relishes his present happiness at Lausanne when he writes of the splendour and magnificence of the reign of Abdalrahman, who founded the palace and gardens of Zehra outside Cordova. Having reigned for fifty years, Gibbon reports him to have said:

I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to FOURTEEN:- O man! place not thy confidence in this present world!⁵⁹¹

Gibbon responds to this in a footnote in the manner of his *Memoirs*:

If I may speak of myself (the only person of whom I can speak with certainty), my happy hours have far exceeded, and far exceed, the scanty numbers of the caliph of Spain; and I shall not scruple to add that many of them are due to the pleasing labour of the present composition.⁵⁹²

More of the happiness of his days at Lausanne will be shown in the next chapter, but its influence on the *The Decline and Fall* could not have

587. The passage in question is set amid his description of Arabia at the beginning of Chapter L: 'The life of a wandering Arab is a life of danger and distress; and though sometimes, by rapine or exchange, he may appropriate the fruits of industry, a private citizen in Europe is in the possession of more solid and pleasing luxury than the proudest emir who marches in the field at the head of ten thousand horse.' (*Decline and Fall*, Vol. V, p. 337.)

588. '...in his mature age, the emperor strove to acquire the practice of writing, which every peasant now learns in his infancy.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p.305.)

589. 'At Mecca, I would not dispute its authenticity: at Lausanne, I will venture to observe...' (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 355, footnote 67.)

590. 'It is natural enough that an Arabian prophet should dwell with rapture on the groves, the fountains, and the rivers of paradise; but, instead of inspiring the blessed inhabitants with a liberal taste for harmony and science, conversation and friendship, he idly celebrates the pearls and diamonds, the robes of silk, palaces of marble...which becomes insipid to the owner, even in the short period of this mortal life.' (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p.374.)

591. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 27.

592. *Ibid.*

been stated more clearly. His own situation is also revealed in the passage about St. Bernard in Chapter LIX. When Gibbon discusses the second and third Crusades in terms of the 'obstinate perseverance of Europe' to preserve the Christian conquest of Jerusalem, he gives 'the most honourable place' among the 'holy orators', who aroused the zeal of the pilgrim warriors, to St. Bernard. His judgement of the saint is remarkably balanced, acknowledging that 'A philosophic age has abolished, with too liberal and indiscriminate disdain, the honours of these spiritual heroes.'⁵⁹³ Yet in a footnote to illustrate how the eyes of the saint were closed to the visible world, he quotes in Latin the story of a disciple of the saint about him making a whole day's journey alongside Lake Lāusanne (i.e., Lake Geneva) without paying any attention to it; and when, that evening, his companions spoke of the lake, they were astonished at him asking where the lake was. Gibbon remarks, in a way that is specific to his view from the house called La Grotte:

To admire or despise St. Bernard as he ought, the reader, like myself, should have before the windows of his library the beauties of that incomparable landscape.⁵⁹⁴

In spite of Gibbon's doubts about the influence of Switzerland on the style of *The Decline and Fall*, it is evident that his life at Lausanne had invigorated the author as he approached the term of his work with the fall of Constantinople, and the effect can be seen to be positive both in terms of his political philosophy and his manner of composition.

⁵⁹³. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VI, p. 346.

⁵⁹⁴. *Ibid.*

9 THE INFLUENCE OF SWITZERLAND ON GIBBON'S LIFE AND CHARACTER

My delightful habitation at once in town and country, my library, and the society of agreeable men and women compose a very eligible plan of life which is shaded with very few and very slight exceptions.⁵⁹⁵

In his account of the secular causes of the rise of Christianity in the fifteenth chapter of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon imagines the perfect life of refined pleasure and useful social activity, only to dispel the vision with the remark: 'But it was not in this world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.'⁵⁹⁶ In springing this surprise on his readers, Gibbon had revealed his view of an ideal way of life for him which, though it owed much to Hume's moral philosophy and was derived from classical concepts expressed by Horace and Cicero, reflected the social life which he remembered at Lausanne from his first two stays and which was to attract him back to Lausanne in 1783.

It is worth reproducing more of the passage as it helps to establish the values that Gibbon appreciated most in social life. Gibbon notes that there are two diverse propensities in those who are well disposed to their fellow beings: the love of pleasure and the love of action. He remarks:

⁵⁹⁵. Gibbon in a letter of 12th May 1786 to his uncle, Sir Stanier Porten. (*Letters*, Vol. III, p. 50.)

⁵⁹⁶. Vol. II, p.37 of *The Decline and Fall*.

If the former be refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life.

There is a relaxed intimacy in his writing, which is more typical of the *Memoirs* than of *The Decline and Fall*, and it is possible to see in the fine balance of this personal philosophy a course of behaviour which he could only perfect during his later residence in Lausanne, when he had the property, resources and fame to return the hospitality which he enjoyed in society.

Art and learning, the charms of social intercourse and regard for economy, health and reputation were all features of Gibbon's experience of Switzerland. Art, in the sense of the social arts, and learning were the achievements of his first and second stays, when he completed his formal education, attended theatrical performances by Voltaire and prepared for his Grand Tour of Italy. The charms of social intercourse were first experienced by him in Lausanne in groups of his own age and tastes, with the names of "la société du printemps,"⁵⁹⁷ where he mixed with both sexes, and "le Cercle."⁵⁹⁸ These two societies, though they intermingled, comprised, respectively, the young people of the Cité from the families of members of the Academy and Cathedral, and the young noblesse of the rue

597. Originally called *L'Académie des Eaux* or *de la Poudrière* - a reference to the valley of the Flon north of the Cité where it sometimes met - and later reconstituted as *Le Printemps*, with Suzanne Curchod as the "presiding officer." (*Historic Studies*, Vol. II, p. 326). Gibbon wrote of this society in his *Memoirs* as meeting during the years 1763/4 in the houses of the young ladies 'almost every day.' (*Memoirs*, p. 130.)

598. It was described by Gibbon when he became a member of it on 6th September 1763 as 'une société assez agreable pour y passer ses momens perdûs. Elle est composée d'environ quatre vint personnes, Etrangers, et gens de condition de la Ville, et trois balles noires suffisent pour en exclure quelqu'un. Ils ont un joli appartement où l'on est sur de trouver du jeu, de la conversation, les gazettes, les journaux etc. En un mot c'est un Caffé choisi.' (*Journal B*, pp. 25-6.) It had been founded in 1761 and was situated in the house of the Loys de Cheseaux family in the rue de Bourg.

de Bourg. Emanating from these charms of social intercourse were the lessons regarding economy, health and reputation, that Gibbon had yet to learn in a society which, except for the interval at Oxford, was the first that he had explored after leaving his family background. Gibbon had many occasions to consider these concerns during his first two periods of residence in Switzerland, as when the silence of Mme de Bochat made him feel that he was becoming regarded as an associate of his compatriots 'qui aime le vin et le desordre.'⁵⁹⁹

The second human propensity identified by Gibbon - the love of action - is described by him in the fifteenth chapter as having a more doubtful nature than the first but, 'when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence,' it is praised for its capacity to lead to the highest social benefits. Although perhaps less obvious to relate to Gibbon's life in Switzerland than the first propensity, it can be found in his lively participation in Swiss society which won for him the love of Suzanne Curchod and the friends of a lifetime, and, during his last ten years in Lausanne, led him to adopt William de Sévery as his son and protégé, and to invite assemblies of over a hundred guests to his home at La Grotte. The completion of *The Decline and Fall* in Lausanne was also, of course, a supreme achievement of 'active industry',⁶⁰⁰ earning him his title to immediate and future fame as the historian of the Roman Empire.

From the passage in Chapter XV of *The Decline and Fall* there can be inferred, therefore, not only Gibbon's belief in those characteristic

⁵⁹⁹. *Journal B*, p. 58.

⁶⁰⁰. A phrase used by Gibbon in the Preface to the Fourth Volume of *The Decline and Fall*. (Vol. I, p. xlvii.)

eighteenth-century values of what is agreeable and useful, but also an indication of his own life and his principal social interests in Switzerland.

* * *

Much can be written on the social life of Lausanne of the period in which Gibbon was a participant, as Meredith Read, the American Civil War general and diplomat with a taste for historical research in the houses of the nobility, discovered when he explored the contents of the attic floor of La Grotte, read the correspondence of Gibbon's friends, and talked with their descendants in the years from 1879 until his death in 1896.⁶⁰¹ The impressions of Gibbon in Lausanne recorded in the diaries, memoirs and letters of others, especially those of visitors not familiar with his appearance and manners, naturally vary according to the disposition of the writers. For the purpose of this chapter, which is concerned with the extent to which Gibbon entered into the society of the Vaud and benefited from the experience, two observers give specially revealing pictures of his person and social manners, at the beginning and end of his life in Lausanne.

From the first period, it is to be expected that the person who observed him in the most interested way, even more so than Pavillard and Deyverdun from their different viewpoints, would be Suzanne Curchod. She described him when she first knew him as follows:

Il a de beaux cheveux, la main jolie, et l'air d'une personne de condition. Sa physionomie est si spirituelle et singulière que je ne connais personne qui lui ressemble. Elle a tant d'expression qu'on y découvre toujours quelque chose de nouveau. Ses gestes sont si à propos qu'ils ajoutent beaucoup à ce qu'il dit. En un mot c'est une des

⁶⁰¹. A large portion of his two volumes of *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy* is composed from the correspondence and genealogical evidence provided by those descendants.

physionomies si extraordinaire qu'on ne se lasse presque point de l'examiner, de le peindre et de le contrefaire. Il connaît les égards que l'on doit aux femmes. Sa politesse est aisée sans être trop familière. Il danse médiocrement. Son esprit varie prodigieusement.⁶⁰²

The description is the partial one of a woman engaged, or about to become engaged, to be married to him, but it is of special interest since it is written by a contemporary of different nationality, intent on recording how the young Gibbon presented himself in the society that he was making his own.

By way of contrast, from the final period of his residence in Lausanne, comes a memory from a detached observer of the prematurely aged Gibbon, showing how securely established he had become in that society:

Ce soir-là, Mme de Charrière recevait la société la plus aimable de Lausanne... C'était à la campagne... On venait de faire quelques jeux et l'on payait les gages. Un des assistans jouait du violon tandis qu'un homme d'un embonpoint remarquable semblait chercher dans le salon quelque chose qu'il ne trouvait point. Enfin, le violon rendit des sons plus forts, et le gros homme, ce n'était rien moins que l'illustre Gibbon, vint prendre la main de M. Tissot, dont la grande figure digne et froide formait le plus parfait contraste avec la sienne, mais ce n'était point assez, le violon jouait toujours, et tous deux durent faire quelques figures de menuet, à la grande joie de toute l'assemblée. C'était l'acquittement du gage que devait payer Gibbon dont l'humeur gaie se prêtait volontiers à cette espèce de plaisanterie.⁶⁰³

This long-remembered glimpse of Gibbon, absorbed in the conventions of a courtly élite, portrays a society, devoted to the enjoyment of personal relationships, in which the interests of women prevailed and from which all the cares of the political world are banished. On the rue du Bourg lived some twenty families which formed 'l'ancienne noblesse'. They gave 'journées' to which thirty or forty guests were invited.

602. *Le Salon de Madame Necker*, Paris, 1882, by Comte d'Haussonville, a descendant of Suzanne, Vol. I, p.35.

603. *Essai sur la vie de Tissot*, Lausanne, Marc Ducloux, 1839, by Charles Eynard, p. 335.

L'assemblée commençait à trois heures après dîner; on servait le café; ensuite les dames d'un certain âge, les mères et les grandmères faisaient des parties de jeu. Les jeunes gens...sous la présidence d'une vieille tante ou cousine (car dans ce pays-là les vieilles filles ne sont ridicules, ni prudes), on faisait toutes sortes de jeux d'esprit, qui étaient propres à exercer l'imagination et former le langage...après le souper on veillait, tantôt dans une maison, tantôt dans une autre; là, nouveaux jeux d'esprit, les dames qui avaient de la voix chantaient avec accompagnement de violon ou de flûte. Souvent on jouait des proverbes, sorte de spectacle très amusant. Quelque personne faisait un plan et une suite de scènes qui étaient exécutées immédiatement. Il y avait quelques acteurs et actrices excellents...⁶⁰⁴

Gibbon had known such assemblies since his youth. His friendship with Deyverdun had led to the unusual situation of an Englishman becoming the occupant of a house with an estate extensive enough to be situated within and outside the old walls of Lausanne, most suitable for giving similar entertainment of his own. So entrenched did he become in the society of that city, that he could write of himself at a dinner at the official residence of the Baillif, when a large party of French émigrés were invited, as 'the only Swiss at table.'⁶⁰⁵

The social charms of Lausanne contrasted with the political awareness of Geneva and struck the casual visitor. Madame Roland, for example, travelling in Switzerland in 1787, described the tone of Lausanne:

Aussi Français ici qu'à Genève, mais nullement préoccupé des sollicitudes du gain, non plus que des intrigues de l'ambition, de la soif de dominer ou de tourment d'être asservi, on ne semble vivre que pour goûter les charmes de l'existence et l'embellir à son gré. Les mœurs sont douces sans être corrompues; ce n'est ni l'austérité républicaine, ni la licence des monarchies...⁶⁰⁶

From a different viewpoint, John Moore, travelling in the 1770's as the

604. From the autobiography of a young Bernois, called Samuel de Werdt de Toffen, quoted in *La Vie*, Vol. I, pp.209-10.

605. Letter of uncertain date but probably of 8th December 1789 to William de Sévery. (*Letters*, Vol. III, p.176.)

606. *Voyage en Suisse 1787*, by Madame Roland, edited by G. R. de Beer, aux Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1937, pp. 72-3.

medical attendant of the young Duke of Hamilton, recorded:

As the nobility, from the country, and from some parts of Switzerland, and the families of several officers who have retired from service, reside here, there is an air of more ease and gaiety (perhaps also more politeness) in the societies at Lausanne, than in those of Geneva: at least this is firmly believed and asserted by all the nobles of this place, who consider themselves as greatly superior to the citizens of Geneva. These, on the other hand, talk a great deal of the poverty, frivolousness, and ignorance of those same nobility, and make no scruple of ranking their own enlightened mechanics above them in every essential quality.⁶⁰⁷

Gibbon confirmed this difference when he wrote to Sheffield on 4th April 1792:

You would like Geneva better than Lausanne, there is much information to be got among the men, but though I found some agreeable women, their manners and style of life are upon the whole less easy and pleasant than our own.⁶⁰⁸

The family whom Gibbon came to know most intimately after 1783, was the de Séverys: Salomon and Catherine (née de Chandieu) de Charrière de Sévery, and their children, William and Angletine, born in 1767 and 1770. Gibbon wrote in his *Memoirs*: 'I am encouraged to love the parents as a brother, and the children as a father. Every day we seek and find the opportunities of meeting...' ⁶⁰⁹ Both the parents came from families who owned estates and seigneuries in the Pays de Vaud and were leading members of the society that wintered in Lausanne. Catherine's grandfather had rebuilt, to the design of Mansard, the family château at Isle on the river Venoge to the north-west of Lausanne, and Catherine was born there in

607. *The Works of John Moore, M. D. with Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, by Robert Anderson, M. D., Edinburgh, 1820, Vol. I, pp. 126-7.

608. *Letters*, Vol. III, p. 252. Gibbon had recently stayed a month in Geneva with the Neckers; in spite of his preference for Lausanne society, he had enjoyed his stay: 'every circumstance that I had arranged turned out beyond my expectation, the freedom of the morning, the society of the table and drawing room from half an hour past two till six or seven, an evening assembly and card-party in a round of the best company, and except one day in the week, a private supper of free and friendly conversation.' (*Ibid.*)

609. *Memoirs*, p. 184.

1741.⁶¹⁰ One of her sisters married into the family of Constant de Rebecque and became the mother of Benjamin Constant. Salomon, her husband, was born in Lausanne in 1724, and was educated in Basle and Paris. His father having died when he was only six years old, he became the adopted son and heir of a paternal uncle. Like many young Vaudois waiting to come into their patrimony, he entered into service abroad and became the governor of the three sons of Prince Frederick of Hesse-Cassel, fulfilling the functions of 'Conseiller d'ambassade' and 'Chambellan' at the court of the ruling prince before returning to Lausanne in 1765.⁶¹¹ He married Catherine de Chandieu in March of the following year and on the death of his uncle succeeded to the lands and seigneuries of Sévery and of Mex in 1780. The marriage was celebrated at Mex and until 1780 the family divided their residence between Lausanne and Sévery, some twelve miles away; thereafter, they fixed their summer residence at Mex, to the north of Lausanne, and frequently spent the autumn at Rolle by the lakeside on the road to Geneva.

Meredith Read discovered how close the memory of Gibbon remained with the de Sévery family when he visited the houses of the family in the nineteenth century. He wrote of their town house at 33, rue de Bourg in 1879:

610. In December 1764, Gibbon had met her father, Benjamin de Chandieu-Villars, who had served as an officer in the French service, and wrote in his *Journal*: 'C'est un homme d'une grande politesse, d'un esprit vif et facile et feroit aujourd'hui a soixante ans l'agrement d'une société de jeunes filles. C'est presque le seul Etranger qui a pu acquérir l'aisance des manieres Francois, sans en prendre en meme tems les airs bruyans et etourdis.' (*Journal B*, p.174.)

611. As late as 1792, the year before his death, de Sévery was advising the ruling Prince, one of his former charges, about the advantages of Geneva as a place of education for his son. He made the distinction between Geneva and Lausanne which has been noted above and adds a significant comment on the relative standing of their academies: 'Mais il est obligé d'avouer que Genève a bien des avantages sur Lausanne, les maîtres y sont en bien plus grand nombre et meilleurs. L'Académie et le manège ont déchu de leur ancien état, il n'existe plus à Lausanne de pensions comme il y a 20 ou 25 ans, et il n'est pas certain qu'on en trouvât une qui convînt au prince héréditaire... Si un jeune seigneur a à peu près terminé ses études et qu'il ne veuille que commencer les usages du monde, Lausanne est préférable, la compagnie y est plus affable et y a de bonnes manières.' (*La Vie*, Vol. II, pp. 309-10.)

It is a large old-fashioned stone mansion, with massive entrance, an interior court, and an exterior court reaching down to the promenade Derrière du Bourg. Ascending with my host [the grandson of William de Sévery, and great-grandson of Salomon] a handsome stone staircase, I remarked in the drawing-room a fine kit-cat of Gibbon with queue and powder, red velvet collar and lace, apparently a duplicate of that at Sheffield Park...⁶¹²

Read also visited the château at Mex, where he saw the yellow Wedgwood china service of Gibbon, still in daily use. It had been selected by the Sheffields for Gibbon in 1784 and he bequeathed it to William de Sévery in 1794. Gibbon had written to Lady Sheffield on 11th May 1784:

I accept with gratitude your friendly proposal of Wedgewood's [sic] ware, and should be glad to have it bought and packed, and sent without delay through Germany. To you I leave the absolute and sole command, but if you have a mind to consult the Baron [her husband] with regard to the ornamental, the creature is not totally devoid of taste: the number, choice, pattern, sizes &c you will determine and shall only say that I wish to have a very compleat service for two courses and a desert [sic], and that our suppers are numerous frequently fifteen or twenty persons.⁶¹³

Read saw in the billiard room a number of engraved portraits that had belonged to Gibbon at La Grotte, including those of Johnson after Reynolds, the historians William Robertson, Robert Henry and John Gillies, George Colman the dramatist, the divines Hugh Blair, Bishop Warburton, William Coxe and Richard Hurd, Mr. Justice Blackstone and the author of Ossian, James Macpherson. He also reported that Mme. de Sévery told him 'that Gibbon's supply of table-linen was so large in quantity and excellent in quality, that his tablecloths and napkins are still in use...'⁶¹⁴

The de Séverys were representative of the noblesse who had their winter residences in Lausanne, situated on or close to the rue de Bourg, and

612. *Historic Studies*, Vol. II, p.474.

613. *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 409.

614. *Historic Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 479-80.

who formed the nucleus of the ruling social coterie. Politically quiescent, they were attached by tradition and interest to "Their Excellencies", the governors of Berne.⁶¹⁵ French and charming though it might seem to the casual visitor, it was a society with wide experience of European culture in general, and of foreign service which was both military and domestic, involving residence in camps or at the courts of monarchs as far away as St. Petersburg. Salomon de Sévery had served two ruling princes of Germany and Georges Deyverdun had been governor of the grandson of the Margrave of Schwedt. The influence of German culture was strong and immediately accessible to Gibbon, living among his Swiss friends in Lausanne, much more than it would have been in Hanoverian England. Salomon in the record of his great-grandson is said to have loved Germany and to have always retained a grateful memory of it.⁶¹⁶

It has been seen in Chapter 6 how Gibbon was dependent on Deyverdun and de Saussure for access to the German authorities on early Swiss history. The five copy-books of translations from the German in the Cantonal Archives, with some comments by Gibbon on the facing pages, are the most tangible evidence of his debt of scholarship to his Swiss friends. Many German authorities had continued to write in Latin, French or English; if this had not been the case, Gibbon could have been expected to make good his deficiency in German, undertaking a course in the language

615. 'Ceux donc qui professaient des opinions libérales, et c'était le cas de beaucoup de jeunes gens, faisaient sagement en allant les manifester ailleurs.' (*La Vie*, Vol. II, p. 264.)

616. *La Vie*, Vol. I, p. 125, where the following sentence is quoted from a letter of Salomon to his wife in 1774: 'Je l'ai dit et le dirai encore bien des fois, la nation allemande est d'une bonté qui l'emporte de beaucoup sur les simagrées et les gentilleses françaises, elle mérite qu'on s'attache à elle, et on peut en attendre des choses vraies, les paroles ont un sens et ne sont point fixées par un usage dénué de sincérité.'

as he had in Italian on his Grand Tour.⁶¹⁷ German authors cited in *The Decline and Fall*, who made themselves available to Gibbon in Latin or English, include the numismatist, Ezechiel Spanheim, and the theologian, Mosheim. The latter is frequently referred to as one of his main sources on early Christian institutions. He had been a professor at the University of Helmstedt, then at Göttingen, becoming chancellor in 1747 until his death in 1755. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Gibbon had met his daughter one evening in August 1763, at the château of the Crousaz family when staying with them on his Grand Tour, and found her 'vive et gaye.'⁶¹⁸

Gibbon would also have had the benefit of conversation with his closest friends on German scholarship. Both Salomon and Deyverdun had been at Göttingen. In the 1770's, Deyverdun, travelled extensively in Germany, as a governor of Philip Stanhope and later of Alexander Hume; while at Leipzig he helped to establish a French Academy; from there, he moved to Göttingen and stayed for some fifteen months. After returning to Lausanne, he read a paper on the University of Göttingen to a society that met at the house of Mme. de Charrière de Bavois, in which he spoke of their professors with the highest praise, considering their lawyers to be the ablest and their library to be the largest in Germany.⁶¹⁹ It was at this time that Deyverdun was also staking his main claim to fame as the translator of *Werther*.⁶²⁰ It is natural to think of Deyverdun when Gibbon discusses a German translation of an Arabic work in connection with the career of the

617. Gibbon had written to his stepmother on his Grand Tour in Florence: 'I am going to take an Italian master and shall endeavour to get as much out of him as I can during my stay here...' (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 181.)

618. *Journal B*, pp. 4-5. See footnote 430 above.

619. *Historic Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 408-10.

620. Published, as *Werther, Traduit de l'Allemand*, by Dufour and Roux, in two volumes, at Maestricht in 1776.

Fatimite caliph, Hakem, in Chapter LVII of *The Decline and Fall*, and mentions that it was 'verbally interpreted to me by a friend.'⁶²¹

The European careers of Gibbon's two closest friends in Lausanne thus offered to him a new insight into the European Enlightenment. Among the foreign visitors to Lausanne, whom Gibbon received at La Grotte, as noted in Chapter 7, were Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother of Frederick II, and the hereditary Prince of Brunswick, nephew of George III. The lesser courts of Germany were well represented amongst visitors to Lausanne, and even more pervasive than these, of course, was the influence of German-speaking Berne and Zurich. As the French scholar, Baridon, has written:

on pouvait sentir en Suisse mieux qu'ailleurs la force de cette jeune "littérature du Nord" dont Madame de Staël allait bientôt dire qu'elle avait sa préférence.⁶²²

Gibbon through his personal friendships had direct contact with this new culture, without ever commanding the language of it; and at the Château of Coppet between Geneva and Lausanne, where Madame de Staël, the daughter of Suzanne, was to be exiled by Napoleon in the home of her parents and where she would cultivate her interest in Germany, Gibbon was welcome as a member of the family.⁶²³

The most famous Lausannois, with whom Gibbon was long afterwards remembered (as cited above) to have danced a minuet as a forfeit, was Dr.

621. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. VI, p. 264.

622. *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome*, op. cit., p. 212.

623. Suzanne Necker wrote to Gibbon from Coppet on 21st September 1792, at a time when Salomon de Sévery's health was declining: 'Je n'espère pas de vous voir ici dans ce moment; mais souvenez-vous, que nous vous avons réservé deux appartemens sous votre nom, l'un à Copet (sic), l'autre à Genève; souvenez-vous que votre société répand mille charmes sur la nôtre, et qu'elle ne change d'ailleurs en rien notre genre de vie; c'est un bien précieux sans aucune soustraction.' (*Misc. Works*, Vol. II, p. 458.)

Tissot. Gibbon had first been invited by his wife to their home in 1763 when he had found the Doctor 'si savant, si froid et pourtant si fort ami des François.'⁶²⁴ Born and brought up in the countryside outside Lausanne, Tissot had studied medicine at Montpellier and qualified as a doctor in 1749. His first written work was a vindication of inoculation in 1755 and thereafter he helped to make the fortune of the printers and publishers of Lausanne with books on onanism and popular hygiene. His *Avis au peuple sur sa santé* went through ten editions in Lausanne alone from 1761 to 1792, and there were numerous impressions in France and translations in English and most European languages, including Polish.⁶²⁵ He was responsible for attracting distinguished visitors to Lausanne; he received offers from monarchs to be the principal doctor at their courts, and honours from universities; and eventually, in 1781, he accepted for two years the chair of medicine at Pavia, through the mediation of the Emperor Joseph II. Returning to Lausanne, he continued to serve both the social elite and the poor of the city, and was on intimate terms with the families of Gibbon's acquaintance.

The medical reputation of Tissot, second only to that of Tronchin on the continent, gave Lausanne a special distinction at a time when medicine and hygiene were regarded as part of the crusade against superstition and obscurantism. The two doctors had a role that in part replaced the importance of the preacher and confessor on the protestant shore of Lake Geneva. The printers of Lausanne had traditionally concentrated on the market for religious works, supplying catholic works over false addresses in

⁶²⁴ *Journal B*, p. 60.

⁶²⁵ *Le Livre à Lausanne: Cinq Siècles d'Édition et d'Imprimerie, 1493-1993*, sous la direction de Silvio Corsini, Payot, Lausanne, 1993, p. 54.

addition to answering the needs of protestant readers. After the middle of the century, they responded to the popular demand for medical knowledge, as provided by Tissot; they also responded more generally to the influence of the French Enlightenment with the publication of the *Encyclopédie* in forty-eight volumes in small format which they shared with the typographical fraternity of Berne, and helped to spread the accessibility of the work to the urban middle classes and literary societies of Switzerland and Germany. The firm of Grasset at Lausanne added to the surge in the production of secular works with a complete edition of Voltaire's writings in fifty-seven volumes from 1770 to 1782.⁶²⁶ Another manifestation of the change from religious to more secular care in the intellectual climate of Lausanne was the fine classical building, constructed in 1766-71 to the plans of the Lausannois, Rodolphe de Crousaz, known as "Le Grand Hôpital." It replaced the mediæval hospital of Notre Dame and was used to shelter the poor.⁶²⁷

Looking back from the late nineteenth century at the social and intellectual life of Lausanne of a century earlier, the puritan-minded General Meredith Read could sense that the vigour of this more secular enjoyment of life with its concern for practical, as much as for spiritual benefits, had declined with the *ancien régime*. Reviewing the lists of members of assemblies and the packets of invitation cards from the time of Gibbon's residence, he concluded that the society of Lausanne 'was entirely

626. Gibbon bought the fifty-seven volumes from the bookseller and publisher, François Lacombe, in September 1784. (Add. Mss. 34,715.) In addition, he owned the thirty volumes of the 1768-77 Geneva edition. (Keynes.) Lacombe opened a "Café littéraire" in 1787 in the rue de Bourg, which was frequented by Gibbon and Deyverdun in the afternoons or early evenings. (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 388 and p. 391.)

627. 'Les médecins n'y exerçaient leur art qu'occasionnellement.' (*Histoire de Lausanne*, publiée sous le direction de Jean Charles Biaudet, Payot, Lausanne, 1982, p. 186.) In his will of 1st October 1791, Gibbon left in trust to the Minister Levade one hundred guineas to be distributed to the poor of Lausanne. (Add. Mss. 34,715.)

devoted to pleasure.' In the meantime, as a result of the piety of preachers, Sundays had become no longer the favourite day for social assemblies, and more attention was given to the quieter pleasures of home life.⁶²⁸

Gibbon was fortunate in the time that he was able to offer hospitality at La Grotte. Increasing secularism and the love of social entertainments, at the expense of the former rigour of Calvinism, undoubtedly added to the appeal of Lausanne for Gibbon. He did not allow his personal relations with doctors or with ministers⁶²⁹ to be affected by medical or theological issues. The cult of mesmerism, which was discouraged by Tissot, was a topic of great interest, as revealed in contemporary correspondence. Mme. de Sévery wrote in a letter of 15th June 1786: 'Le soir, Gibbon et Deyverdun ont dîné ici, nous avons bien ri du magnétisme!'⁶³⁰ In matters of religion, Gibbon was respectful of the opinions of his Swiss friends and accompanied them to church. There was one occasion, however, when he mistimed a social invitation through failing to observe the requirements of religion and this caused the Baillif Erlach, despite his great regard for the historian, to write to him on 29th August 1791, as follows:

On dit par la ville qu'on danse demain chez M. Gibbon; si cela était vrai, M. d'Erlach prie instamment M. Gibbon de ne pas le permettre. Nous sommes entre deux dimanches de communion et avant le 9, qui est le lendemain du jour du Jeûne, il est absolument défendu de danser.⁶³¹

628. *Historic Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 461-2.

629. A particularly close friend of Gibbon at Lausanne after 1783 was David Levade, 1750-1834, minister and professor of theology and morals. In September 1788, Gibbon commissioned him to show Charles James Fox round the town on the second day of his visit (*Letters*, Vol. III, p. 127 and p. 132); he helped Gibbon in supervising alterations to La Grotte after the death of Deyverdun; and Gibbon frequently dined at the wooden pavilion, which still survives in front of the west façade of the Cathedral, where the Levades entertained, 'amid exotic plants and a *volière* of canaries,' distinguished visitors, such as Sophie Laroche, the friend of Goethe and Wieland. (Low's *Edward Gibbon, 1737-94*, *op. cit.*, p. 337.)

630. *La Vie*, Vol. II, p. 150. Earlier, Deyverdun is alleged to have sought a health cure from magnetism at Strasbourg in 1782-3. (*Historic Studies*, Vol. II, pp. 437-8.)

631. *La Vie*, Vol. II, p. 53.

In the autumn of that year, Gibbon stayed with the de Séverys at Rolle, taking his cook and servants with him, when extensive alterations were made to the living quarters at La Grotte.⁶³² On his return, he reported to Catherine de Sévery:

Le vestibule a pris un air propre et symetrique qui vous fera plaisir. La salle à manger est veritablement une belle piece et elle me paroît si chaude et si commode que deux ou trois convives s'y trouveront tout aussi bien que vingt ou trente, et à l'aide de deux paravents on lui donnera la forme et la grandeur qu'on voudra.⁶³³

The library now took its final form, as left by Gibbon. It was described by Meredith Read, when he saw it in 1879, as 'covered with wood from floor to ceiling, painted a dull yellowish white.'⁶³⁴ Three windows took up much of the south wall and overlooked the prospect of vineyards, lake and Alps, and the three other sides were filled with bookcases built into the walls. The shelves had supports, which could be moved up or down, and the cases had doors that could be closed and locked. The effect, when the cases were closed, was like a box, as Gibbon reported in his letter to Catherine de Sévery.

Perhaps the most ambitious entertainment that Gibbon offered to the society of Lausanne at La Grotte was a ball, which he hosted on 29th March 1791 with the assistance of the de Séverys, especially the mother and the son. He wrote to Lord Sheffield:

It opened about seven in the evening, the assembly of men and women was pleased and pleasing, the music good, the illumination splendid, the refreshments profuse; at twelve, one hundred and thirty persons sat down to a very good supper: at two I stole away to bed in

632. Deyverdun had died in July of that year. As Gibbon explained in a letter to his stepmother of 5th December 1789: 'By his will he designed that I should possess the delightful house and garden which I inhabit and which have not I believe their equal in Europe; by a subsequent arrangement with his heir in which both find their advantage I have secured the free and indisputable enjoyment for my life, and have already made some agreeable and useful alterations.' (*Letters*, Vol. III, p. 175.)

633. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 173.

634. *Historic Studies*, Vol. II, p. 493.

a snug corner, and I was informed at breakfast that the remains of the Veterans or young troops, with Severy and his sister at their head, had concluded the last dance about a quarter before seven...This was an extraordinary event, but I give frequent dinners, and in the summer I have an assembly every Sunday evening.⁶³⁵

With such attractions, Gibbon hoped to attract the Sheffield family to visit him that summer for two months, and, in spite of the turbulence in France, his wish was fulfilled.

Entertainment of a more seriously musical nature in the form of a concert was provided at La Grotte on 25th April 1792, which may serve as a final example of Gibbon's active participation in the social life of Lausanne. He had written on 23rd February to William de Sévery, who was then staying with the British Minister in Turin:

Pour célébrer mon retour [from a stay with the Neckers in Geneva] vous y deployerez toutes vos acquisitions tramontaines, et nous y engagerons tous les talens gentils et stipendiés de Lausanne; il sera beau n'est-ce pas, ce concert! et tout le monde dira qu'on trouve le meilleur Vin chez les gens qui n'en boivent jamais.⁶³⁶

The joke, as the editor of his letters notes, is a reference to his known insensibility to music. But, under the humorous irony, lies the evident determination of the historian, imbued with the spirit of the continental Enlightenment, to please as well as to serve society.

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The city where Gibbon had first met Voltaire, where he had fallen in love with Suzanne, the future mother of Madame de Staël, where he had formed his friendship with Deyverdun, who would guide him in the world

635. *Letters*, Vol. III, p. 219. The Cantonal Archives have a guest list of 155 names, of which 59 are marked as 'danseurs.'

636. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 244-5. There is a plan of the concert in the Cantonal Archives; the musicians included violins, altos, flute and clarinets, cors and basses, but there is no indication of the programme of music to be performed.

of German scholarship, might well seem to him at the end of his parliamentary career in 1783 to be the most appropriate place to complete his life's work. The proof of the success of that decision lies in the serenity of spirit with which he wrote the final chapters of *The Decline and Fall*, as shown in the previous chapter. That serenity of fulfilment, derived from his situation at Lausanne, was most memorably expressed in the *Memoirs* when he celebrated the final moments of his life's work:

It was on the day or rather the night of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau or covered walk of Acacias which commands a prospect of the country the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene; the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all Nature was silent.⁶³⁷

637. *Memoirs*, p. 180.

CONCLUSION

*The love of study, a passion which derives fresh vigour from enjoyment, supplies each day, each hour, with a perpetual source of independent and rational pleasure; and I am not sensible of any decay of the mental faculties.*⁶³⁸

This thesis has been undertaken in the belief that the influence of Switzerland on the life and work of Gibbon was more extensive than has previously been acknowledged. In these chapters, dealing in chronological order with the effect of the society, language, history, constitution, military organisation and religion of the Swiss on his beliefs and assumptions, I have set out to show the importance to Gibbon of Switzerland in his education, his choice and treatment of historical subjects, and his political and personal philosophy. The review of his writings inspired by Switzerland, or affected by his residence in Switzerland, include, in his formative years, his *Journal de mon voyage*, composed at the age of eighteen in 1755, his *Letter on the Government of Berne*, which is established here to be a work of the 1750's, his first publication, the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, the *Journals*, which cover the years up to his tour of Italy in 1764, the topographical survey of classical Italy, entitled *Nomina, gentesque antiquae Italiae*, and his *Introduction à l'Histoire Générale de la République des Suisses*. Finally, the

638. *Memoirs*, p. 186.

influence of Switzerland has been shown, with the aid of his *Memoirs* and his *Letters*, to pervade the political and cultural judgements in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and to determine his place of residence and choice of society that was essential to his happiness.

By good fortune and by design, his experience of Switzerland gave him a fuller understanding of political liberty and the classical idea of the good life, reflected in his lively espousal of what is agreeable and useful in his mature writings. As Madame Roland had noted of Lausanne: 'Les mœurs sont douces sans être corrompues; ce n'est ni l'austérité républicaine, ni la licence des monarchies.'⁶³⁹ Gibbon, as a historian, wrote of the discipline of republican valour, and of the relaxation of the arts and luxuries fostered by monarchies. He sought in his private life a situation that combined both. He knew in concluding his *Memoirs* that he was fortunate in his experience of Switzerland, in terms of the friendship and the home that it provided as he completed his *History*. When he had written of Antoninus Pius that

He enjoyed with moderation the conveniences of his fortune, and the innocent pleasures of society; and the benevolence of his soul displayed itself in a cheerful serenity of temper,⁶⁴⁰

he might have been anticipating a summary of his own manner of life in Lausanne.

As his enjoyment of his comforts increased, and the effect and extent of the French Revolution became closer, he grew more tolerant of the rule of Berne, and a few pages before dating a draft of the *Memoirs* as at 'Lausanne. March 2: 1791', he wrote:

While the aristocracy of Bern protects the happiness, it is superfluous

⁶³⁹. See p.195 above.

⁶⁴⁰. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, p. 84.

to enquire whether it be founded in the rights, of man: the œconomy of the state is liberally supplied without the aid of taxes; and the magistrates *must* reign with prudence and equity, since they are unarmed in the midst of an armed nation.⁶⁴¹

Evidently, he could still appreciate the political balance that military preparedness gave to the Pays de Vaud in its dependence on Berne, though he had abandoned his desire for liberation which would yet inspire the Vaudois patriots when his *Letter on the Government of Berne* was eventually published.

Nevertheless his attitude to liberty and industry, and to the role of the commons in the constitution of a country, originated in the more liberal response of his youth to the beginnings and evolution of the Swiss nation. He continued to admire contemporary manifestations of their military commitment and of their enterprise, such as the silk factory of M. Escher in Zurich. Though he had suppressed his *Letter on the Government of Berne*, the legacy of that love of liberty and independence, that is expressed in it, pervades his judgement of the political fortunes of the Roman Empire in its decline. The political will of the citizens of Rome was a mere shadow of its former state in the later centuries of the Senate, and the rigour of the discipline of the Roman infantry was relaxed, and diluted with the admission of foreign auxiliaries. In contrast, Switzerland provided a model in miniature of a nation which had never wavered in its commitment to communal assemblies and military preparedness.

In the course of his writings, Gibbon uses a recurring illustration from the landscape of Switzerland to epitomise the evolution of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. It was a site that he had visited on his

641. *Memoirs*, p. 185.

journey through the northern cantons of Switzerland, at the age of eighteen. Then he had written of the abbey of Königsfeld which had once flourished in the fertile and prosperous valley of the Aare near the town of Brugg. In his study at Buriton, on his return from the Grand Tour, he had referred in his *Swiss History* to the site as 'Une assez petite enceinte [que] contient des monumens de tous les siècles.'⁶⁴² When he came to annotate the thirty-eighth chapter of *The Decline and Fall*, he had assumed the role of 'the philosophic traveller,' and used the place where the 'ancient walls of Vindonissa, the castle of Hapsburg, the abbey of Königsfeld, and the town of Bruck [Brugg], have successively arisen' to compare 'the monuments of Roman conquest, of feudal or Austrian tyranny, of monkish superstition, and of industrious freedom.' It was a scene which allowed him to assess the values of secular and religious dominion in different ages, and to make clear his own preference for a life of freedom and industry. In composing the final volumes of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at Lausanne, Gibbon had achieved that freedom and industry, and, in his chosen role of philosophic traveller, he could 'applaud the merit and happiness of his own times.'⁶⁴³

642. *Misc. Works*, Vol. III, p. 243.

643. *Decline and Fall*, Vol. IV, pp. 112-3.

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